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प्रज़नथ
PRAZNATH

A discourse on
Kashmiri Identity and culture

Saptarishi Samvat 5086 (Jyeshtha Shukla Paksha- Bhadra Krishna Paksha) Vol. 1 – No. 2 July-Sepetember 2010

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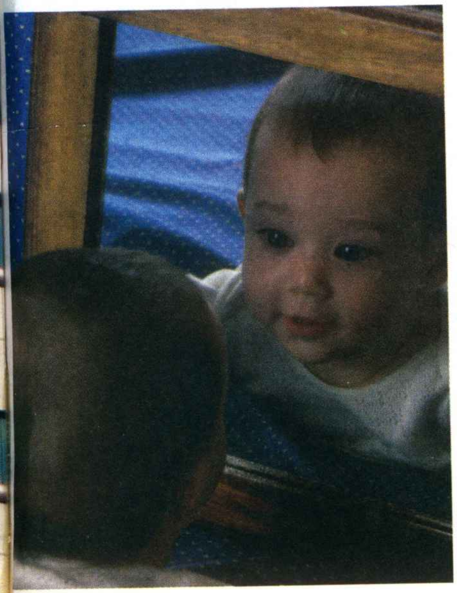

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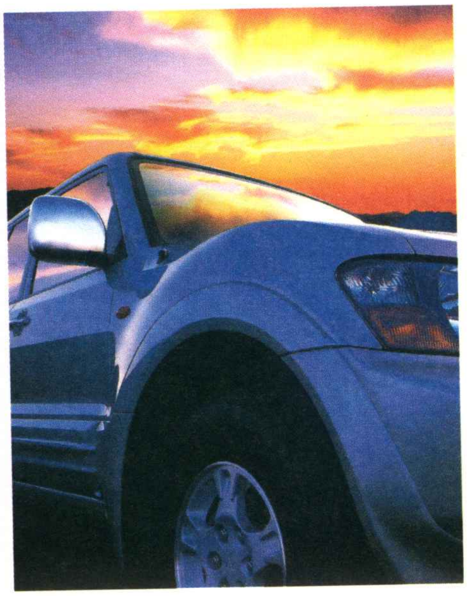

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July-September 2010

प्रज़नथ
PRAZNATH

Saptarishi Samvat 5086 (Jyeshtha Shukla Paksha-Bhadra Krishna Paksh

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Cover: Ruins of the famous Sharada Temple of Kashmir, situated on the banks of the Krishan Ganga river (now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir). Dedicated to the worship of Sharada the goddess of learning, speech and music, the shrine attracted pilgrims from all over the country till the partition in 1947. References to the Sharada temple have been made by Kalhana, Bilhana, Al Beruni, Jonaraja, Abul Fazl and others as an important pilgrimage place and a centre of Sanskrit learning. According to a legend, king Jayasimha of Gujarat commissioned Hemachandra (1088-1172 AD) to compose a new grammar of Prakrit. The great Jain scholar is said to have consulted the necessary reference material in the library of Sharada in Kashmir. Some scholars believe that it was at Sharada that Adi-Shankaracharya's ascension to the sarvajna peeth (Throne of Omniscience) took place. For details of the temple complex please see the article In Search of Roots on page - 29 of this issue.

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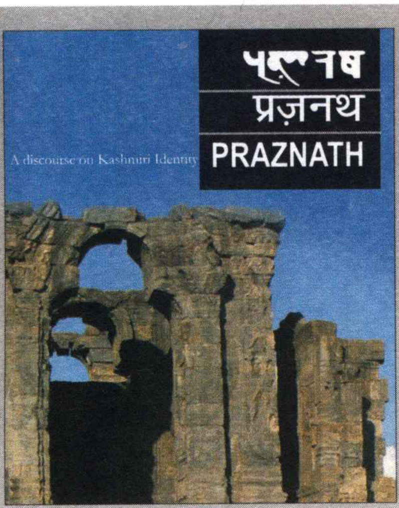

April-July 2010 issue

The cover picture of the last issue shows the remains of the central shrine of the Martand temple, located about 68 kms. southeast of Srinagar and 8 kms. northeast of Anantnag. The temple, built by the warrior king Lalitaditya in the second quarter of the 8th century, looks imposing and vibrates with vitality even in its present state. Standing majestically on a lofty plateau, with snow covered mountains rising in the background, Martand commands a magnificent view of the valley below. The site presents an "atmosphere of reposeful serenity" and reinforces the dignity of the temple, which like Konark is dedicated to Surya, the Sun god.

Assimilating and absorbing Gandharan-Bactrian and Gupta influences, Kashmir had developed its own regional idiom in architectural and sculptural art which reached its apogee in the time of Lalitaditya. Characterized by "beauty, vitality and grandeur", this distinctive idiom found its grandest expression in the colossal temple of Martand an dthe Avantipur temples.. With hardly any contemporaneous or later temple that "can compete with it in its dimensions and grandeur", Martand served as a model for temples built in the succeeding ages.

Rectangular in plan, the temple is enclosed within a courtyard with the main shrine containing the central image of Surya standing in the middle. It is surrounded by a colonnaded peristyle wall having 84 secondary shrines in it and containing as many fluted columns. The main temple consists of a spacious *mandapa*, an *antarala* and an oblong *garbha–griha* or the sanctum sanctorum. Some of its walls are richly carved with images. It is erected on a high platform approached by a flight of stairs. The *mandapa* is flanked by two double chambered wings and has figures of Vishnu Chaturanana and probably five-faced Mahadeva carved in relief. There are also six subsidiary shrines in the compound. On the northern wall of the *antarala* or the middle chamber, is carved within a trefoil niche a graceful image of the river goddess Ganga standing on her vehicle *makra* with her two attendants. On its southern wall is the image of Yamuna on her vehicle tortoise. The sanctum is without any decoration from inside.

The pyramidal roof of the temple is missing but the immense entrance to the quadrangle is to the west facing the sanctum still stands consisting of a trefoil arch set within a tall triangular pediment standing on engaged pilasters. Each of the niches of the eighty four shrines surrounding the principal temple originally contained an image. On the southern and northern walls of the well designed entablature are six seated figures each of what were probably the twelve Adityas. On one of the niches of its eastern wall is the damaged image of Surya on a chariot with the charioteer Aruna holding the reins of the seven horses.

The entire temple complex of Martand, where active religious worship continued till the end of the 14th century, was desecrated and considerably damaged at the instance of Sikandar the Iconoclast. It also suffered extensively due to vandalism and the destructive forces of nature.

Dear Editor

A copy of the magazine PRAZNATH sent by you was submitted to His Holiness. I am directed to convey that the contents of the magazine are well-researched and helps highlight the culture and status of J&K to a wider section of society. The photographs in the various articles(like the homes of the Pandits) are really nice and an eye-opener for those who do not have the means to travel to the State in person and visit them. The details of your article were informed to His Holiness and as per His instructions shown to some of the devotees who visited the math yesterday. HH also desires you to bring pamphlets which contain complete information of Praznath to distribute it among important people who come to the math. Blessings of Their Holinesses Pujyasri Sankaracharya Swamijis of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam is conveyed to you and the magazine for a long and cherishable journey in the service of the State of Jammu & Kashmir and our Country.

R. Vijay Kumar Mehta, **Kanchipuram**

The inaugural volume of Praznath (April-June 2010), launched with the objective of "starting a discourse on Kashmiri consciousness through its contents and concerns, raising questions and looking at issues and the related themes" in the correct perspective, contains thought provoking material that revives our nostalgic attachment with the land of our birth. Beginning with late Arun Kaul's saffron saga, all the articles have been carefully chosen and present a kaleidoscopic mosaic of Kashmiri aesthetics, religions, folk theatre, personalities, literature and language, all of which give us the unique identity or Praznath. Veer Munshi's photographs showing the deserted, desolate and destroyed Kashmiri Pandit homes in the Valley are heart-rending and so is Sushil Pandit's description of the feelings, heart-aches and experiences of our parents and grand parents, "home tourists" as he aptly calls them, when they venture to revisit their surroundings in whose laps they had grown and spent their lifetime and also their houses, some standing in the same form, some purchased and reconstructed by their old neighbours and some lying in ruins. They watch these with moist and vacant eyes with little hopes of going back again during their lifetime. What a pathetic tale! Radhika Kaul, born post-migration, has amazingly managed to retain her deep attachment with her lost roots – the land and the mother tongue – assiduously nurtured in her absorbent mind by her parents through narrations of their sufferings and uprootment. A young girl who herself speaks and converses in broken yet enjoyable Kashmiri, rightly laments on the growing disinterestedness of her contempories in speaking in their mother-tongue because as she herself puts it "my land and language will always be my identity". Geetika Kaw Kher's piece on Kashmir School of Painting shows her grasp on the subject and should rekindle the reader's interest in the Kashmiri art through the ages. The Hindi section of Praznath also contains interesting literary pieces but a number of printing errors that have crept in cannot escape notice. This is so with the English section as well in which at places one finds even paras and sentences getting repeated. On the whole Praznath does make an impact, aestethically as well as content-wise. One hopes the unintentional glitches will be taken care of in the forthcoming editions and Praznath will stand out in its own right.

A. N. Kaul Sahib, **Delhi**

I write to express my sincere thanks for giving me a copy of the beautiful publication Praznath which is truly a discourse on the Kashmiri identity and culture. I must compliment you for bringing out a beautiful keep sake publication on Kashmir.

Sudarshan Agarwal,
Former Governor -**Uttarakhand & Sikkim**

Praznath appears to be purely literary in nature and that is what makes it unique.Some of the articles written by a new and upcoming generation of community activists, who come from varied professional backgrounds makes it all the more interesting in the sense that a new breed of 'intellectual volunteers' are slowly taking over the community struggle. The forced exile, from our place of origin, has virtually put a question mark on our distinct identity. One hopes the claim of restoring at least a part of that identity to the displaced community will be fulfilled, to a larger extent, through the medium of Praznath. One is quite hopeful that the boat of Praznath, under the rudder-ship of a well known scholar Dr. S.S Toshkhani, will glide through the waters of distorted myths and help in removing the haziness created by the "glib tongued intellectuals and biased media" about the Kashyap Reshi's land, its earliest inhabitants and their great contributions to India and beyond. And, till we are able to find answers to Neelnaag's predicament, as expressed in M.K.Santoshi's poem 'Neelnaag Ka Duhswapna' that whether Jalodbava had actually died, one can hope to continue to dig out the treasures of our past and enlighten our minds with the real and rare wealth that has eluded us because of rise of Islamic fundamentalism in a place once known as 'the paradise on earth' and thereby counter effectively the myths that question the very existence of our 'Internally Displaced' community through the medium of Praznath. Yes, We Can!

Ramesh Manvati, **New Delhi**

I would like to contribute a photofeature on the treasure trove in the hitherto neglected region of Ladakh. These pictures were shot on location by Satyen Wanchoo. One of the visuals is so stunning you can use it on the cover. I can see that Praznath is a real labour of love, and such ventures do need advt support to make them sustainable. Do send me your advt tariff, I will try to garner some support.

Mrs Ratan Kaul, **New Delhi**

I was very happy to see a copy of the inaugural issue of the Praznath. The need is to maintain the same standard in future issues as well.

T.N.Dhar 'Kundan', **Bangalore**

Perspective

The responses to the first issue of Praznath were immensely positive, inspiring the hope that the raison d'etre of the publication of the journal has been well appreciated. It appears that the discourse started by us regarding the history and character of Kashmiri identity and culture while seeking to question the legitimacy of certain uncritically accepted paradigms of interpretation that have attained dominance for a long time for reasons of political investment in some unverified assumptions, has stimulated interest in intellectual and literary circles. It would be interesting for us to know how far our basic contention that in any discourse on identity of a people, indegenity as well as continuity and breaks in history and traditions should be kept in mind and not association with a particular geo-political terrain alone, has found support among those interested in debating the issue.

As cultural identity is shaped by cultural memory, a dislocated community has to continuously renew and preserve it through processes that do not allow the past to recede from its consciousness as it is situated in a present determined by that past.

It is true that identity must have a locus, but it is not necessary that this locus should be defined in terms of geography alone; it could well be in the consciousness, having cultural and valuational dimensions. This is particularly true of people who have been forced to scatter in diaspora in situations of strife and conflict far away from the places of their origin. We are obviously talking of communities like Kashmiri Pandits dislocated from the spatial location that constituted the natural frontiers of their cultural habitat. In situations like this, which represent a tectonic movement, ruptures leading to confounding of boundaries and erasing of markings become inescapable and it is only by comprehending the essential meanings of a culture and articulating it in terms of the values it represents that the challenge of preserving identity can be met. Spatial location is only one aspect or dimension of it.

A culture and its processes, as Prof. Daya Krishan points out, "have to be continuously preserved, maintained, and passed on to a successive generation in order that they may survive and not die out through forgetfulness or loss of knowledge regarding what they meant and how they can be reproduced." A cultural act, as he says, is a product of consciousness, which also plays an essential role in its transmission through the forms it embodies as well as in the interpretation of the symbols it generates. Varied and complex as the forms that a consciousness embodies are, they point to a past that has been "existentially lived through and experienced". To preserve their identity a people belonging to a culture have to track the 'foundational moments' of the manifestations of that culture and assert the continuity of its practices with the past from where it all started while establishing a deep relationship with it through memory. As cultural identity is shaped by cultural memory, a dislocated community has to continuously renew and preserve it through processes that do not allow the past to recede from its consciousness as it is situated in a present determined by that past. As far as dislocated Kashmiris are concerned, they cannot but be particularly cautious about agendas that seek to destruct the basic contexts of their identity and cultural ontologies or replace them by illegitimate structures in the name of an illusory commonality based on discontinuity of traditions and hegemonic notions of history that deny them a sense of selfhood.

For Praznath, therefore, it is a self–imposed task to identify and expose the agendas aimed at subverting identity through aggressive annexing and appropriating mechanisms and severing it from its origins. The question of origins is important as, to put it in Prof. Saran's words (quoted by Prof. Daya Krishna), "a thinking that forgets the question of 'origins' cannot be original..." The intention in no way is to view or interpret Kashmir's cultural past in static terms, to present it as a frozen fact of cultural history, ignoring the transitions this culture has undergone in course of its development in time and editing the drama of its encounters, and therefore contrasts, with other cultures and civilizations. What we at Praznath are committed to on the other hand is to explore and investigate the moulds and matrixes that gave Kashmiri culture its formative values and distinguishing features so that these can be retrieved from the intrusions and proliferations of alien elements incompatible with its basic formations. It is a fight against cultural amnesia and at the same time an attempt to emphasize the "singular signatures" of Kashmiri specifities.

This issue of the journal is an attempt to carry forward the discourse through writings reflective of the above thinking. The readers may find in them a subtle insistence on giving centrality to the foundational visions and traditions, and the concepts, images, symbols and texts embodying them, that have been pushed to the margins but form the "affirming specifics" of civilizational identity of Kashmir. We had not planned for its being focused on any special theme, but as we received three articles, all concerning what is popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism, and a third one on a subject closely related to it, an unintentional focus emerged by itself. Thus, we have two important papers providing deep insights into the *spanda* and *pratyabhijna* schools of the non-dual Shaivism of Kashmir, a philosophy that rejects the otherness of God and invites us to explore the infinite expanse of our own consciousness, from absolutely fresh perspectives. In the first paper titled 'Spanda: Signature of Existence", Neeraj Kumar expresses the view that the Spanda doctrine "holds in its womb coming fusion of sacred and scientific knowledge". Defining *pratyabhijna* as the "intuitive gnosis of the recognition of Parama Shiva as the Supreme Self", the second paper, 'Thoughts on Pratyabhijna Hridayam" by Swami Parananda takes us to the oceanic depths of the aphorisms of the great expository text by Kshemraja, Abhinavagupta's foremost disciple. There is a third article, in which the young writer, Neeraj Santoshi, while expressing his anguish on the fading away of the guru-shishya tradition of non-dual Shaivism from among the Kashmiri Pandits, profiles Mark S. G. Dczcowski as a great Shaiva master of modern times.

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We have also a significant paper on a theological theme, which, though not apparently related to the Kashmiri identity debate as such, has nonetheless a tremendous bearing on many aspects of it. Titled 'Non-dualism / Monism, Monotheism and Polytheism', the paper presents an original analysis of the theological categories into which worldviews on the ultimate reality are usually classified viz. monotheism and polytheism. The author, Ravindra Kaul, rejects the traditional classification for being narrow and non-inclusive and presents an alternative classification that encompasses the non-Judeo-Christian-Islamic worldviews like the Dharma traditions of India and the scientific versions of reality, brilliantly expounding on the real meaning of the term dharma.

Conceptualizing ethnicity in these times of ethnic cleansing not as a "generalized category" but as a historical-cultural-specificity defining identity, we have a short but brilliant piece by Shantiveer Kaul titled 'On Ethnicity'. Beginning with a critique of Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din's notions of identity in his recently reprinted controversial article 'The Identity of the Kashmiri People', which he finds "palpably replete with outlandish claims and illiterate formulations", Kaul asks certain pointed and fundamental questions about ethnicity in a referential framework in which he wants "to posit the subject of Kashmiri Pandit identity".

A broad picture of how the people of Kashmir lived in ancient and early medieval times, their social organization and institutions, their belief systems and traditions, their values and ideals that emerges from S.S. Toshkhani's article 'Social Life in Ancient and Early Medieval Kashmir', will surely be found fascinating by the readers. Based on evidence gathered with considerable investigative ardour from scattered and fragmentary sources, both literary and architectural, it delineates some hardly known and little known facts about the social life of ancient Kashmiris.

Prof. Ayaz Rasool Nazki presents a captivating account of his vision at Hari Parbat and his journey to the

Sharada temple complex in the picturesque upper Kishan Ganga valley (now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in search of his roots. He was the "first Kashmiri and Indian to travel to Sharada from this side of divide in 60 years."

Then we have in this issue Sushil Pandit reminiscing in beautiful prose and poignant style about the moments he spent with his maternal grandfather in Srinagar during his childhood when he was fascinated with the sacred thread he wore, called *yonyi* in Kashmiri *('Threadbare')*. The fascination spilt over to his growing up days and early youth in Delhi when he, driven by his desire to know about his identity as a Kashmiri, encountered some "gut-wrenching" facts of history featuring that "loosely spun cotton thread".

In his article 'Kalhana and Kaliyug', Jawahar Lal Kaul presents an interesting riddle for the readers as well as scholars to unravel about the date of the beginning of the Mahabharata war, in which the Kashmirian king Damodar could not participate as he was too young at that time, and the date of the beginning of Kaliyuga.

Language is one of the most important mediums through which a civilization articulates itself best, though it need not necessarily be confined to any particular language to express its concerns and contents. With about a millennium of literary history behind it, the Kashmiri language is at present going through paroxysms of an existential crisis. Particularly agonizing over this crisis are the dislocated Kashmiris whose shifting to different linguistic zones has cut them off from their mother tongue which bears the stamp of the identity that distinguishes them as a cultural and ethnic entity. But the crisis had began much earlier than their exile from Kashmir with Kashmiri having been nudged out by Urdu not only at the administrative level but even at the "primary level of pedagogy", being never given the status of the language of instruction. In Kashmir it is now loosing out to Urdu even at the level of socio-cultural exchange. For the displaced Kashmiris, the predicament of Kashmiri has become a very serious issue connected with a severe sense of cultural loss that could well lead to their deracination as a linguistic community.

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Worried about the situation, Radhika Kaul, the youngest member of the Praznath group, has suggested a way out. In her excellently produced paper titled 'Kashmiri as a Heritage Language and its Pedagogy', she has pleaded for giving Kashmiri the status of a "heritage language" just as Spanish has been given in the US (as the language of the English-knowing Hispanic minority), and designating displaced Kashmiris as 'heritage language speakers'. She has also devised a strategy for pedagogy of the language, taking ideas from some prevailing projects for teaching of Kashmiri. Her ideas, quite stimulating and original, need a serious discussion by scholars whose opinion we would very much like to solicit.

This issue of Praznath has a Hindi section also as a regular feature, which though slender in volume, represents the new sensibility and idiom that distinguishes diasporic Kashmiri writing. The Hindi section carries a short story *'Dara Shikoh ki Maut'* by Maharaj Krishen Santoshi, a major displaced poet from Kashmir who has also been expressing his trauma of loosing his home and his sense of identity through short stories. Recently he published a collection of his short stories under the title *'Mere Ishwar ko Tairna Nahin Ata'*, which is being reviewed in this very issue in English by Geetika Kaw Kher, our coordinating editor. Another piece appearing in the issue is a review of Kshma Kaul's widely acclaimed and powerful novel *'Dardpur'* which documents the waves of hatred, violence and killings unleashed by Islamist terrorists on her long persecuted community during the harrowing days of the 1990's. The reviewer Dinesh Kumar Shukla has hailed the work as an "unprecedented saga of human courage." In the coming issues we intend to give more space to Hindi and add a Kashmiri section.

Nostalgia is the dominant mood evoked by the charcoal drawings of Kapil Kaul displayed on the centre-spread. Born in Sringar, Kapil Kaul now lives in Austria as an artist and art teacher. With this we present this issue of Praznath to our readers and hope that they will find its contents engaging.

Insight

Spanda: The Signature of Existence

Niraj Kumar

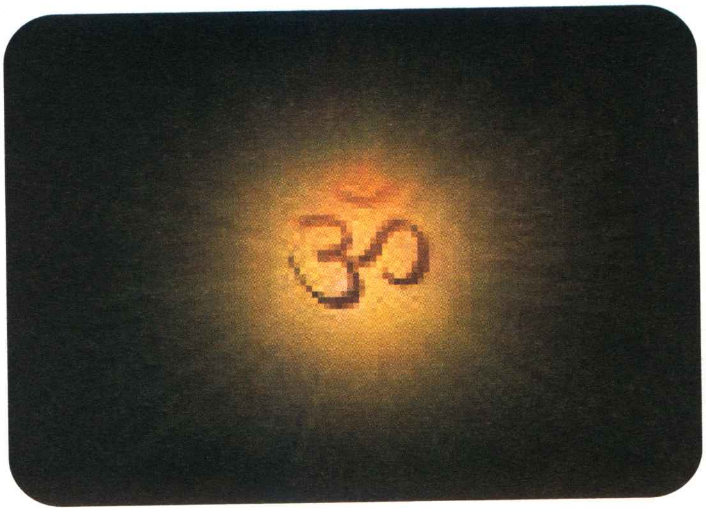
The concept of '*spanda*' is at the heart of the remarkable doctrine of Kashmir Shaivism. Etymologically speaking, *spanda* is a throb, a vibration, an oscillation between manifestation and disappearance, emergence and dissolution. Now, modern science is finally grappling with the United Field Theory and eagerly waiting to examine the voluminous data emanating from the collision of sub-atomic particles in the LHC Project, Geneva; the interest of the philosophers who seek to formulate meta-narrative, is bound to deepen in the glorious legacy of the Spanda doctrine that constitutes one of the pillars of the non-dualist Kashmir Shaivism.

> **Scientists at the Blue Brain Project at Geneva which is building artificial mammalian brains were surprised to observe bizarre phenomena last year. Artificial silicon neurons respond to external stimuli and pulse and flash synchronously. Pulsation seems to be present beyond biological world.**

There are two schools of thought in modern physics that are at loggerhead. While adherents of the Standard Model pit for the 'field theory' of physical universe; in recent years the bandwagon of chaos/fractal theorists have gained prominence, who posit the idea of 'scalar invariance of structures' in a dynamic universe. The field theory presupposes 'vibratory mode' as the fundamental nature of the universe. Fields are produced by oscillatory movement and the quantum theory presupposes linear oscillators at work at sub-atomic level. Particles invariably have quantum numbers like spin number. The String Theory postulates existence of one-dimensional strings that consists of oscillating loops vibrating as various sub-atomic particles like electrons and protons. The String Theory that considers varying oscillation of string as the cause of manifestation of different particles lies at the extreme end of this dominant paradigm. The whole universe gets reduced to mere vibration, mere throb of "physical nothingness", since physicality itself is merely an appearance of vibration.

Neuroscientists have discovered in the last decade the phenomena of synchronous oscillation of neurons in the cerebral cortex and have proposed that this pattern of synchronous pulsation in the brain generates a mechanism whereby various sensory data contribute to the perception pf 'wholeness 'of observed phenomena. There cannot be a perception of unified object without this mechanism. Heart beat, breathing, and similar kind of internal rhythm are present across biological world. Pulsation in biological system is explicitly visible if one observes a beheaded chicken. Muscles continue to rhythmically expand and contract even though the body is cut into pieces. Rhythm precedes the birth and continues even after death. Scientists at the Blue Brain Project at Geneva which is building artificial mammalian brains including that of human beings were surprised to observe bizarre phenomena last year. Artificial silicon neurons respond to external stimuli and pulse and flash synchronously. Pulsation seems to be present beyond biological world. All living beings survive by the process of glycolysis i.e. glucose is broken down and energy is produced. Now, the glycolytic cycle itself has been found to be pulsating. Discovery of temporal oscillation at the level of chemical processes at sub-cellular level shows the ubiquity of *spandan*. The case of Belousov-Zhabotinsky reaction in chemistry where the concentration of chemicals pulsates with different colours is often cited by theorists of the dynamic system.

Physicists are finding themselves perturbed by observing certain interesting phenomena. There is a set of particle called 'neutrino'. Neutrinos have 'o' charge and insignificant mass. Neutrinos form a shadow universe since these don't interact much with the matter that constitutes us. Therefore, millions of neutrinos from the sun, cosmic rays are continuously passing through us without causing any interaction. Proton-proton collision creates new particles that immediately decay into neutrinos. LHC at Geneva is experimenting with the behavior of neutrinos even. There are three families of neutrinos (muon, electron, tau). Scientists are perplexed to find that one type can oscillate into another. Therefore, oscillation/pulsation seems to be an inherent characteristic at much deeper level than even beyond the appearance of our type of 'universe'.



On the other hand, the fractal theorists discover reiteration of self-similar structure/form at various scales of the universe, like Russian Matryoshka dolls where self-similar dolls are nested one inside the other. The hierarchy and nesting of self-similar structures is easily discernible in cauliflower or broccoli where tiny pieces look much like the whole vegetable. The fractal paradigm can be summed up in philosophical terms as 'microcosm reiterates macrocosm". The only difference is in the scale of seeing. Fractals are found in every dynamic system. In reality, everything in the universe is in flux. There is no absolute rest or changelessness in the phenomenal universe.

The *Spanda shastras* unify the two conflicting paradigms of contemporary times, The Spanda doctrine espouses "vibration' as well as hierarchy, nesting and recurrence of self-similar structure of the Being. The Spanda *shastras* contain the seed of future of our human civilization.

The future of science depends upon the experimental result at the LHC. If the elusive Higgs boson is discovered, the SUSY (Super Symmetry) Theory, the String Theory and dozens of hypotheses based on the presupposition of 'wave/field/oscillation' at the root of physical universe will get fresh lease of life. But, if the nature of Higgs particles itself appear "fractal', the whole science, consequent technology and future of human civilization will take an unprecedented turn.

The *Spanda shastras* unify the two conflicting paradigms of contemporary times, The Spanda doctrine espouses "vibration' as well as hierarchy, nesting and recurrence of self-similar structure of the Being. The Spanda *shastras* contain the seed of future of our human civilization.

Situating the emergence of the Spanda School in the matrix of history

The origin of the Spanda doctrine can be attributed to Vasugupta (c.800 A D). In his *Spandanirnaya*, the commentary on the *Spandakarika*, Kshemaraja (11th century), the cousin and pupil of Abhinavagupta, mentions how the Shiva Sutras were revealed (*unmilita mahima*) to Vasugupta by Lord Shiva Himself. Vasugupta received guidance in a dream. He went to the sacred Mahadeva Mountain and found the *Shiva Sutras* engraved on the surface of the rock. The *Shiva Sutras* contain 78 *sutras* or aphorisms. There is a difference of opinion on the authorship of *Spandakarika*, the 51–sutra commentary on the *Shiva Sutras*. Kshemaraja, Maheshvarananda and Daniel Odier attribute the composition of the *karika* to Vasugupta. Bhaskara and Utpala mention Kallata, the disciple of Vasugupta, as the writer of *Spandakarika*. Jaideva Singh opines that Vasugupta composed the *karika*s and taught to Bhatta Kallata who only publicized them.

The revelation of the *Shiva Sutras* to Vasugupta seems to be determined by the criss-crossing religious and philosophical trajectories prevalent in Kashmir during his time. Shankaracarya (788-820 A.D.) had visited Kashmir and reinvigorated Vedanta philosophy by incorporating the then dominant conception of Reality as a form of Non-dual Absolute as propounded by Nagarjuna in the Madhyamika school of Buddhism. Around 760 A.D., King Trisong Detsen of Tibet invited Padamsambhava and Shantarakshita (705-762A.D.) to Tibet. Shantarakshita was the then abbot of the famous Nalanda University. Both of them introduced Buddhism into Tibet and indulged in translation of Dharmic texts. Later, they founded the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet at Samye near Lhasa in 767A.D. The king declared Buddhism as state religion in 762 A.D. They must have passed through Kashmir during their sojourn in Tibet and influenced the local Kashmiri scholars. In fact, many of the translators in the team were Kashmiri Pandits. Ananta was the interpreter for Shantarakshita in Tibet. Kashmiri scholars like Dharmakaradatta, Jinamitra, Danashila, Shraddhakaravarman, Ratnavajra, Lakshmi, Subhutisrishtani, Somanatha, Mahajana, Sukshmajnana, Parahitabhadra, Parahita, Kumarshri, Trilakalasha, Kanakavarman were some of the well known scholars and translators from Kashmir who were invited to perform preaching or translation work in Tibet. The Tibetan king organized a two-year dharma debate at Samye (792-794 A.D.), known in history as the 'Council of Lhasa'. A master of Ch'an Buddhism, Hva-shang Mo-ho-Yen was propagating the view of sudden enlightenment that springs without much effort. Ch'an Buddhism had become popular in China after being introduced by Bodhidharma who hailed from Kanchipuram during the early 6th century. Ch'an Busshism on its way to Japan evolved as 'Zen' which outright rejects logic as a way to reach Truth. Kamalshila, the disciple of Shantarakshita and a resident of Magadha defeated the Ch'an master in the debate on the nature of 'emptiness'. Since then, the trajectory of Buddhism in Tibet followed the Indian path and the Chinese influence on religious evolution of Tibetan Buddhism was arrested. The victory of Kamalshila must have been known to Kashmiri scholars who often accompanied Buddhist masters from India into Tibet.

The exile of Buddhist monks from Tibet and revelation of *Shiva Sutra* to Vasugupta are synchronous occurrences. There is a strong possibility that Buddhist monks fled to Kashmir also, which was famous as the abode of wisdom. This might have initiated a process of philosophical synthesis in Kashmir.

Subsequent to Kamalshila's victory, Indian Buddhism emanating from the centre of Nalanda was officially declared as the state religion in Tibet. This is known as the 'First spreading'. But, soon it met a serious assault at the hands of an unpopular King. Langderma ascended the throne in Tibet in 836 A.D. and began a drive to cleanse Tibet from Buddhist influence. Monasteries were destroyed and monks were reconverted to lay persons or else sent into exile. Though Langderma was soon assassinated in 842 AD, Tibet fell into domestic upheaval and civil war. This situation continued for more than a century.

The exile of Buddhist monks from Tibet and revelation of *Shiva Sutra* to Vasugupta are synchronous occurrences. There is a strong possibility that Buddhist monks fled to Kashmir also, which was famous as the abode of wisdom. This might have initiated a process of philosophical synthesis in Kashmir. The way the *Shiva Sutra*s are stated to be revealed to Vasugupta is reminiscent of the legend of revelation of *Prajnaparamita Sutra*s to the great Madhyamika philosopher, Nagarjuna in the land of Nagas. In Nyingma tradition (the oldest school of Buddhism in Tibet founded by Padamsambhava during the 8th century). The concepts of '*terton*' and '*terma*' were widely prevalent. *Terma* mean the revealed teachings which past masters hid for discovery by later *terton*s (discoverers) at appropriate time. Generally, the secret knowledge (*terma*) was physically discovered as engravings in rocks or caves or many a times in intuitive flash in the mind itself.

There is a preponderance of possibility of a deep influence exerted by the exiled Buddhist masters upon discovery of the *Shiva Sutra*s by Vasugupta. Kashmir was under the rule of Karkotas (626-855 AD). They followed the Vaishnava sect. Spread of religious ideas is inextricably linked with the proximity of a particular religious worldview with the political authority. Since major monasteries and institutions were funded by the imperial authorities, the sects vied with each other to mould the viewpoint of the kings and their ministers or else to modify their own teachings to accommodate the viewpoint of the king. More than two centuries of rule by Vaishnava Karkotas couldn't have provided a fertile ground for Shaivism to bloom and flourish.

However, Shaivism was on the ascendance all across India and South-East Asia at this juncture. In Tungbhadra-Kaveri and Tungbhadra- Bhima zone of Karnatka, construction of new Shiva temples far outnumbered temples/monasteries of other religious sects. A similar pattern is evident in Andhra. The Pala dynasty encouraged and supported the spread of Buddhism from Tibet to South-East Asia. Palas contributed significantly in building and maintaining major Buddhist centres like Nalanda, Vikramshila, Semapura,Trikatuka, Uddandapura, Jagaddala. Yet Devpala's (period of rule from 812-850 AD.) son Mahendrapala was strongly attracted towards Shaivism. Mahendrapala (850-865 AD.) built two temples, one for Buddha and the other for Shiva. This suggests a build-up of fusion of Shaivite philosophy and practices with Buddhism since major centres for innovation of concepts in Buddhism were dependent on Pala support.

During the same period, Shaivism was gaining pre-eminence in Khmer kingdom and the fusion process of Shaivite-Buddhist texts and practices gained impetus. During the 9th and 10th centuries, the Shaivite idea of 'lokeshwara' was fully internalized by the Tantric Mahayana Buddhists. Kings were portrayed as avatars of Shiva as in Angkor and even as Bodhisattava as in the temple at Bayon. The cult of Heruka emerged in Buddhism based upon iconography inspired by the imagery of Shiva. Since, the same donors supported both the religions; both the streams were deploying a greater degree of appropriation to win the adherence of the political authorities.

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Buddhanirvana of Chàm Kingdom in Indo-China records that his father, Somnatha donated two *viharas* for Buddha and built two temples to Shiva. Similar assimilation and appropriation is evident in eastern Java. George Coedes mentions in his work, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (1968) that a syncretic cult of Shiva-Buddha evolved both in Mataram (Central Java) and Angkor. Two great works appeared simultaneously under the patronage of the Mataram ruler Sindok (929-948 A.D.): the Javanese Ramayana and the Tantric Buddhist treatise *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan.* Airlangga (1010-1050AD), the founder of the Kahuripan kingdom was consecrated as the king in 1019-20 AD by a Buddhist as well as a Shaiva priest in Mataram. During the Singhasari and Majapahit periods (1222-1292 AD and 1293-1500 AD), this syncretism continued to flourish. Imperial formations provided simultaneous support to both Shaivism as well as Buddhism.

Even in Kashmir, Lalitaditya (724-761 AD) gave equal patronage to every sect, Hindu or Buddhist. He constructed temples for Shiva as well as statues of Buddha. But, his successor Karkota kings were weak and unimaginative. Avantivarman (855-883 AD) who ascended the throne at the time when Tibet was in the throes of a civil war causing massive exodus of scholars to adjoining areas, founded the Utpala dynasty. He patronized Kallata, the pupil of Vasugupta who is credited with writing the *Spandakarika*, a commentary on the *Shiva Sutras*,. His reign is credited with effervescence in every aspect of life in Kashmir. It is an open question whether the impetus came from scholar-émigrés from Tibet or was it wholly nativistic?

Some contours for this fusion in a vast geo-cultural region can be drawn. The Siddha tradition gained prominence during 9th century with the advent of Saraha. Saraha, too, was associated with the Nalanda tradition. The Siddhas repudiated the use of language of metaphysics engaged by scholars and sang *charyapadas* in Apabhramsha, the mother of modern–day languages like Hindi, Bengali or Oriya. They were the carriers of the fusion process. They were the great alchemists of ideas and took the best practices from the flourishing sects. They emphasized more on direct realization than contemplation over obtuse philosophy. Since, they wanted to take their teachings directly to the people and not to the imperial overlords, they introduced theistic elements in their teachings which could attract all and sundry. The Siddhas accepted Shiva, Jina, and Buddha to be one and the same from different views. The Tibetan teachings of Padamsambhava carried the stories about experiences of the Siddhas to Tibet. It is in this fusion which has left indelible marks on history of various sects in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Kapalikas, a fiery Shaivite sect that flourished in Kashmir during this period mention Nagarjuna as one of the twelve pupils of the sect. In *Guhyasiddhi Sangraha*, it is stated that Vajrayana was inseparable from Shaiva and Pashupata system as basic practice for both is *mahamudra*. Some consider the Kapalika tradition itself as a fragment of the *Niruttara tantra* practices of Nyingma tradition. There is a strong overlap between Natha, Siddhas and Kapalikas. The names of Gorakhnath, Jalandhar Nath, Nagarjuna as lineage gurus are common in all these sects.

Kumarila, a Buddhist monk, who later converted into Shaivism is a good example of the fluid matrix. There is a strong likelihood that Shaivism in a new avatar sprouted in Kashmir upon the vehicle of Tibetan Buddhism following tumultuous affairs after Langderma's ascension.

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In *Spandanirnaya*, his commentary on the *Spandkarikas*, Kshemraja emphasizes that the *Spandakarika* is basically presentation of *mahamudra*, the cosmic gesture, which later became the foundation of Kagyu lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. The great transmission master of the Kagyu sect, Naropa (1016-1100 AD.) though born in a royal family of Bengal, went for study in Kashmir at the age of mere 11, since at that time Kashmir had emerged as an important seat of Buddhist wisdom. In 1049 A.D., Naropa went to Nalanda and was elected as an abbot. Naropa's name is mentioned in the list of 84 Siddhas along with familiar names like Gorakh, Saraha and Matsyendranath. Naropa epitomizes the close connection and fluid exchanges between Nalanda, Kashmir, Tibet and Bengal. Naropa received *mahamudra* from his guru, Tilopa who had four transmissions that included *mahamudra*, *tantra*, *bardo* and *chandali* (correspondence with *Kundalini* or Mother Shakti encased within the body) from different teachers. Now, *mahamudra* is the ultimate goal not only in Kagyu sect and Kashmir Shaivism (it is epitomized in the *tandava* dance of Shiva), but also forms an important aspect of the teachings of the Natha and Siddha sects.

Bodhibhadra, the disciple and successor of Naropa at Nalanda was a Kashmiri Pandit. Sribhadra Bodhibhadra is credited with translating the texts of the Kalachakra tradition. He was also the teacher of Atisa Dipankara (982-1054 A D) who went to Tibet in 1040 A D upon an invitation of the Tibetan king and is credited with reforming the excesses that had crept into Buddhist practices due to misinterpretation of texts. Abhinavagupta, who synthesized various schools of Kashmir Shaivism in his magnum opus *Tantrloka*, pays obeisance in the beginning of the text to Matseyndranath. The Kalachakra tradition considers *Tantraloka* as an authoritative text in their practices. There is so much fluidity among various sects, emerging syncretism and inter-textuality that sometimes the sense of distinction (*apoha*) itself evaporates.

Take the case of Matsyendranath. *Tantraloka* begins with salutation to him. He is considered as a direct disciple of Shiva. His name is encrypted in Buddhist legends. He is identified with Avalokiteshvara in Buddhism. In Nepal, he is the patron saint. This concept of *Ishwar/Adinath/Svayambhu* is common in every sect during this period. Probably, this kind of fusion took place in the centre of Nalanda and spread to the Himalayan region comprising Kashmir, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Assam. The Himalayas seem to be a crossroad between Kashmir and Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist tradition of Eastern India. What can be stated as the better synthesis and synchronous throb in the geo-cultural zone than the fact that the sacred mountain of Kailash and the pristine lake of Mansarovar is revered by both the Hindus and the Buddhists?

Shaivism cannot be viewed in isolation from the criss-crossing and fluid trajectories of dynamic religious ideas emanating from various centres across South and Southeast Asia. The evolution of these trajectories were often determined by the imperial formations as well as advent of creative geniuses like Gorakh, Saraha, Padamsambhava, Naropa, Matsyendranath, Vasugupta, Abhinavagupta. In all likelihood, the expulsion of Buddhist scholars during the first half of the ninth century to adjoining areas caused effervescence in Kashmir analogous to the process of renaissance created in Italy after the fall of Constantinople and exodus of the Arab scholars into Italy. Since most of the interpreters as well as translators in Tibet were Kashmiris, they would have returned to their native place and reinvigorated the debate, fusion, assimilation with fresh ideas of synthesis, theistic God in spite of a philosophy of 'vacuity' and Absolute monism carried in their minds through translation of great works of Buddhist tradition.

Sixteenth Karmapa often stated that Kashmir Shaivism is the 'southern lineage' while Karma-Kagyu's *Chakrasamvara Tantra* is the 'northern tradition'. But, emergence of Kashmir Shaivism was determined by further local dynamics of evolution of Vedantic thought and phoneme-transcendentalism. A brief description of the main tenets of the Spanda school of Kashmir Shaivism is necessary before charting out the influence of other thought- trajectories.

Basic tenets of the Spanda School

There are four schools in Kashmir Shaivism namely, Krama, Kula, Spanda and Pratyabhijna. Each of these schools has a common conceptual framework, like primacy of consciousness over material world, physicality of appearance, Reality as manifestation of absolute consciousness, non-duality, and a close interconnection between phonemes and the phenomena. The basic postulate of the Spanda School is the dynamic nature of the fundamental Reality, that the universe is the grosser manifestation of the vibration mediated through sound /letters /phonemes. The vibration emanates from the 'ecstatic self-recurrent consciousness ". (Jaideva Singh, *Spanda-Karikas: The Divine Creative Pulsation*, p.xvii). Everything in the universe throbs, but the genesis of the throb is atemporal vibration of the Supreme Consciousness. If a practioner can learn to contemplate on the movement of the tiniest of entity or phenomena, he can reach the source, the absolute consciousness. This brings the state of liberation, permanent bliss and the will of the realized person merges with the will of Supreme Shiva. He becomes one with Shiva.

Since, the *Shivasutra* revealed to Vasugupta is an *agama shastra*, the first commentary, *Spanda-Karikas* being composed by his disciple Kallata, the main propositions of these two texts form the foundation of the Spanda School of Kashmir Shaivism.

The *Shiva Sutra*s contain 77 verses in three parts which reflects the Trika philosophy, the unique feature of Kashmir Shaivism. The first part contains 22 aphorisms, the second ten and the final forty-five. The very first aphorism "*chaitanyamatma*" (the creative state of the highest consciousness is the Reality of everything) posits primacy of consciousness over matter. Thence follows the aphorism on recurrence of the triad structure at various levels of manifestation: the three kinds of bondage, three kinds of knowledge, three states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, and sleep) [verse 1.7-1.10]. An authentic yogi enjoys the oneness of awareness in all the abovementioned states of consciousness. And he gains Shiva's unlimited power of creativity. The second part begins with the aphorism, '*chittam mantrah*' (mind is mantra) (verse 2.1). Guru is the means to knowledge of the *matrikachakra* (the wheel of alphabets). The world is seen as manifestation of the word. The universe is the gross manifestation of *Shabda Brahma* (Highest sound-consciousness). At the highest level of *paraavak* (beyond speech) word (*shabda*) and the meaning (*artha*) are in a state of unity. It is only in the descent of manifestation that differentiation occurs. The world, as well as the word, are manifestations of *matrika* (phonemes). *Matrika* emerges from primordial 'supreme speech', *paravak*, the original spoken Word of Shiva. *Paravak* is the creative power (*vimarsha*) of Parama Shiva. Mind of practitioner becomes 'mantra' itself by intense contemplation of the deity inherent in the mantra. Mantras are not mere mumbo-jumbo, but a gradual ascent towards *paravak* and the Ultimate Reality.

Matrikachakra is the art to unite the subjective world and the objective world through phoneme-universe. There are two series of alphabets in Sanskrit -- 16 vowels representing the Shiva-principle (subjective world) and 36 consonants representing the Shakti-principle (the manifested, objective world). There are 50 alphabets and the Universe is a manifestation of the alphabetic soup. Shiva has five *Shakti*s: *cit sakti* (*anuttara*/highest consciousness), *ananda shakti* (bliss), *iccha shakti* (will), *jana shakti* (knowledge) and *kriya shakti* (action). Shiva ceaselessly acts in the world through these five *shakti*s in manifestation (*srishti*), maintenance (*sthiti*), withdrawal (*samhara*), concealment (*trirodhana*) and grace (*anugraha*) [Verse 3.30].

Based upon works of earlier grammarians, the aphorisms presuppose three stages of manifested sound - *pashyanti*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*. Wheresoever there is motion, there is vibration and sound. *Spanda* is the throb of Parama Shiva, a movement without succession. Thence arises the soundless sound, *nada* and *bindu* (light), the two aspects of creative Shiva, *prakasha* (manifestation) and *vimarsha* (concretization) symbolized respectively by *bindu* and *nada*. *Paravak*, the supreme speech gradually materializes into physical universe as syllables and alphabets through three stages *pasyanti*, *madhyama*,*vaikhari*. *Paravak* is the *vimarsha* aspect of Parama Shiva, the power of '*aham*'(self-awareness). *Pashyanti* is the visual sound, the image of idea before expression. *Madhyama* stands in the middle between ideal form of speech and spoken word, between visual speech and vocal speech. *Vaikhari* is the uttered sound. *Matrika*s are phonetic constituents of *vaikhari*, while *vaikhari* represents *kriya shakti*. *Matrika*s are the seed of every language from which all kinds of words and sentences emerge. Since, there are three-fold energies of Shiva i.e. *para* (subjective), *parapara* (cognitive) and *apara* (objective), man can realize his identity with Shiva through cognitive path. That makes the world of *matrika*s and mantras very important for the practice of an aspirant. Since mantras arise from the *spanda* principle, they contain the aspect of Shiva.

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The first verse of the Second Awakening of the *Shiva Sutra* is '*chittam mantrah*' (mind is mantra). It is through the deep awareness of one's identity with the supreme consciousness embodied in a mantra and thus becoming identical with that supreme consciousness, mind itself becomes mantra. Kshemaraja explains in his *Vimarshini* commentary that it is the mind (*chittam*) itself which is mantra and not mere a combination of letters.

The first vowel '*a*' stands for the ultimate reality since there is nothing beyond it. It is the *anuttara*. When '*a*' self-reflects, it duplicates and reunites with itself, creating '*a-a*' (*aa*). '*Aa*' represents '*ananda*' principle. The phoneme '*I*' signifies *iccha shakti*, the desire for manifestation. '*u*' connotes *unmesha* (manifestation of *iccha* in ideal state of *jana*). '*A*' is the root of all creation and through '*i*' (*iccha*) comes into manifestation (*u*), *unmesa*. *Anuttrara* manifests in infinite form through combination with *iccha* and this describes the *svachhanda* (freedom) aspect of Parama Shiva.

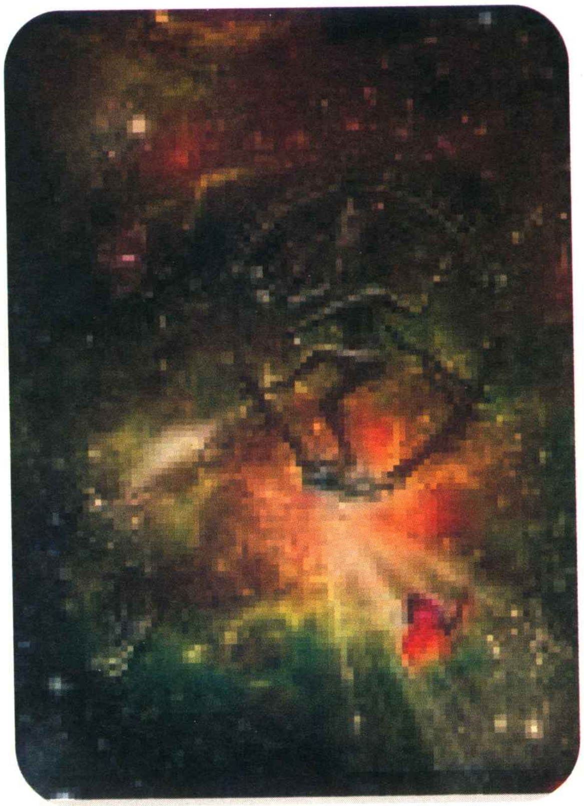
In *matrikachakra*, Panini's rule of grammar is followed to create a linguistic universe that corresponds with the physical reality. Panini's grammar had significant influence over scholars in Kashmir. Chandragomin founded the Chandra school of Sanskrit grammar in Kashmir. Lalitaditya's grandson, Jayapida ruled Kashmir for 31 years (782-813 A.D.). He himself was a student of Sanskrit grammar and one of his ministers, Vamana was the author of *Kashikavritti*, a commentary on Panini's work. It is the influence of Panini and Bhartrihari that shaped the esoteric ideas of *matrikachakra*. Structural resonance recurs all around. Panini divided his magnum opus, *Ashtadhyayi* into eight chapters. Patanjali, who wrote the *Mahabhashya*, a commentary on Panini, is known for his concept of *ashtanga yoga*. In *matrikachakra*, a similar structure is reiterated. There are two garlands of letters containing vowels and consonants. There are 16 vowels with 8 pairs like '*a*', "*aa*'. There are 8 *varga*s of consonants each governed by great Mother Shakti. It is not merely a coincidence that Kalhana chronicled Rajtarangini in a similar structure with 8 chapters and used '*taranga*' (etymologically homologous to *spanda*) in his historical narrative about this period in Kashmir.

By employing the technique of *pratyahara* i.e. combining the beginning and the end, *udaya* and *pralaya*, the whole universe can be perceived. To master this *matrikacakra* is a sure way to achieve one's identity with the Supreme Consciousness. '*a*' is the *anuttara*. '*ha*' is the *anahata*. '*A*' is the *para* (highest in the hierarchy of vowels, the subjective world). '*Ha*' is the lowest in the list of the consonants (objective world). *Bindu* is the consciousness of Shiva, the potential for manifestation. One can create a cakra(cycle) by uniting the supreme subjectivity ('*a*') with supreme objectivity ('*ha*'). The word '*aham*' is one of the most significant conceptual categories in the *Spanda Shastras*. *Aham* is self-awareness. The sense of self-awareness pervades the whole universe.

*Matrika*s contain five great energies of Shiva. These energies are like *chakra* as these moves in rhythmic cycles. An aspirant who realizes that these *chakra*s are same as Shiva, the knowledge of *matrika-chakra* dawns on him.

In the verse 4 of the Second Awakening in the *Shiva Sutras*, the state of '*khechari*' as the stage of realization of Shivahood is mentioned. This is the stage of *ananda* (bliss) of vast expansion of spiritual consciousness. (*Khechari* is one that moves in *kha* or the vast space). This comes after realizing the infinite creative power inherent in the *paravak* and its manifestation, the *matrichakra*.

The first verse of the Third Awakening in the *Shiva-Sutras* mentions '*atma chittam*'. This verse itself is a combination of first verse of the First Awakening (*chaitanyamatma*) and first verse of the Second Awakening (*chittam mantrah*). If two verses are combined, the first verse of the Third Awakening (*atma chittam*) can be created. The full verse on combination will run as "*atma chittam, chaitanyam mantrah*". Since, Kashmir Shaivism followed *trika* structure to unravel the way to achieve liberation in this very life, the three Awakenings and three verses are beaded in same structure. It is stated by the commentators that the First Awakening describes the *Shambhopaya*, the Path of Shiva to achieve liberation. The second explains the *Shaktopaya*, the Path of Shakti and the third *anavopaya*, the Path of the Senses. If the first path is the path of supreme will (*iccha*), the second and the third correspond with the path of knowledge (*jana*) and action (*kriya*) respectively.



But, the Trika philosophy is not concerned with merely understanding triads. There is the *turiya*, the way to transcend the triads in the world of immanence. This was known as '*chatushkoti*' in the Vedas. Om has three phonemes, *a, u, m* and the fourth is the vibration. Similarly, speech is made up of three parts, *pashyanti, madhyama, vaikhari* and the fourth is the *paravak*. *Chatusapada* has been extensively used in the Kashmiri literature. Therefore, I am of the view that the Kashmir Shaivists merely renamed the prevailing idea of *chatushkoti* (3+1) in Buddhist and Vedic philosophy as well as grammar as Trika '+1'. Even the trident (*trishul*) represents the '3+1' structure. The three prongs are the three *Shaktis*: *para* (supreme), *parapara* (supreme cum-non-supreme) and *apara* (non-supreme). But, the "*paratita*" is above the central prong of the trident that represents 'beyond", the *Shakti* embodying supreme beatitude. I am quite certain that cryptic text of *Shiva Sutra*, structured in Trika way contains the seed of the transcendence by an unnamed fourth. There is hierarchical nesting of the self-similar structure as found in the fractal paradigm of a dynamic universe. While combining the first verses of the First and the Second Awakenings, one arrives at the fourth of this *chatushpada / chatushkoti* structure. In the combination, "*atma chittam, chaitanyam mantrah*", since '*atma chittam*' is the first verse of the Third Awakening, '*chaitanyam mantrah*' is the fourth, *turiya*, the beyond. This sums up the emphasis and deep engagement with the sonic nature of the universe, structure of the phoneme and the textuality of the phenomena.

The Third Awakening describes inferior ways to achieve realization, the way of *kriya* that includes various breathing techniques, visualization and yogic postures. This section expounds on the eight energies of Shiva manifesting in the phonetic world. Eight *vargas* of consonants represented by different *shaktis* is visualized as surrounding the highest *shakti* sitting in the centre of *brahmarandhra*. These eight *matrika* mothers have been termed as the Mother of 'beast' in the *Shiva Sutra* since these *shaktis* govern all differentiated knowledge mediated through linguistic reality. Since the manifest universe has limitations and is bound, it is symbolically addressed as the beast. By the practice and constant *japa*, the mantras reveal as the deities themselves. The 43rd verse in this part reveals the technique of self-realization through breathing, while the 44th verse concerns with the Kundalini yoga. Mother Kundalini is termed as the *pranam* (energy of life). A yogi repeatedly experiences the revealing and concealing aspect of the objective universe. For him, the objective universe is visible as mere grosser manifestation of the inner light of consciousness and is identical with it.

Spanda in the form of *paravak* is the supreme consciousness which once realized fills the seeker with eternal delight. The three methods (*upaya*s) contained in the three parts of the *Shiva Sutra* for self-realization lead the *sadhaka* to the state of *anuttara*. In this state, the unity of the universe and the self is realized. The '*soham*' (I am That) state pervades consciousness in the three states of consciousness. There is experience of indivisibility inside and outside. One finds consciousness as the root of physical universe. Physicality is mere concretization of grosser state of consciousness. This causes the dawn of the Highest Bliss (*jagdananda*).

Spandakarika, the commentary on the *Shiva Sutra* contains 51 verses reflecting the manifestation of *matrikas* [50 alphabets plus the dot (*bindu*)] as the phenomenal universe. The first verse describes the *spanda-shakti* (*Shankari*) representing *unmesha* (emergence) and *nimesha* (absorption) of the Shakti of Shiva. *Spanda* is at the root of experience. Mantras derive their power from the *spanda* principle and take the individual to the state of identity with Shiva. The last verse states that when the aspirant realizes the *spanda* principle, he can control the emergence and dissolution of the *samskara*s (mental impressions of one's action as stated in karma theory in the Indian tradition). One can become the lord of each of the five groups of *shakti*s i.e. *iccha* (will), *kriya* (action), *jana* (knowledge), *chitta* (consciousness), and *ananda* (bliss).There is always a rhythmic oscillation in the existence due to the succession (*krama*). *Unmesha* and *nimesha* are the play of evolution (*vikasa*) and concealment (*sankocha*). One, who understands the *spanda* principle, realizes the Supreme Reality, the source of all powers of creation and dissolution of the world.

The *Spanda Shastra*s present a view of existence where consciousness is primary and the objective universe is mere manifestation, a condensation of consciousness. The pulsation and rhythm is at the root of the existence. The words correspond to the world.

'*Aham*' and '*maha*' exist simultaneously. *Aham* is the perception of phenomenal universe, the first awareness. Its inverse is '*maha*', the principle of re-absorption, the dissolution. The *Spanda Shastra*s present a view of existence where consciousness is primary and the objective universe is mere manifestation, a condensation of consciousness. The pulsation and rhythm is at the root of the existence. The words correspond to the world. Since the whole universe is always dynamic and in ceaseless motion, the sound principle gets greater attention. Each motion produces sound, audible or inaudible for us. The sound principle manifests in a hierarchical universe from subtle to gross and constitutes the world. The *paravak* is represented within human body in the *sushumna nadi* (central channel) as the Mother Kundalini and by comprehending *matrikachakra*, the cycles of phonemes and their manifestation in the universe; aspirant can move from gross mantra to the source, *paravak*. *Paravak* is the succession-less (*akramik*) soundless sound where words and meanings exist as an undifferentiated unity. Realization of that state fills the yogi with eternal delight. The yogi realizes that the world is not an illusion (*maya*), but real and manifestation of the *spanda* principle. The world is a creative play of words. There is no extra-textual reality. The Highest Reality is dynamic, creative, free (*svachhanda*) and the cause of primordial a-temporal vibration. Through mastery over sound (mantra), the highest principle can be realized and one can attain the creative and blissful *svachhanda* power of Parama Shiva.

The *Spanda Shastras* are unique texts that combine the best principles of grammar, linguistics, subtle energies, subjective experiences, human anatomy, physiology, psychology, philosophy and traditions. The *Spanda* doctrine situates the individual in the cosmic hierarchy and delineates the way to realize the Supreme Consciousness. Retrieving the genealogy of certain elements of the *Spanda* doctrine is necessary to appreciate this jouissance (*rasa*) of multiple Indian and Asian traditions which were colliding, fusing and parting during this landmark period.

Rajovada of the Vedas and *Spanda*

The *Nasadiya Sutra* of the Rig Veda contains the Vedic doctrine of cosmogony which contains the seeds of many of the ideas of the *Spanda* doctrine. '*Sat*' is the physical existence while '*asat*' is the *prana*. The *sat* is born from the *asat* (Rig Veda. 10.72.2-3). *Asat* and *sat* have their existence in the Absolute Brahman called *Parama Vyoma* (RV. 10.5.7). *Asat* and *sat* interact is mutual conjunction as Bull-Cow (Father and Mother Principles of Creativity). *Asat* is the feminine principle, Aditi. *Sat* is the male principle. *Vak* (speech) is an attribute of *vyoma*. *Parama vyoma* is the *akshara* (alphabet), imperishable Absolute. One can notice the parallel thought in the *Spanda* principle where Parama Shiva is the Absolute Consciousness. The dynamic vibration principle is the feminine Shakti and the existence principle is masculine Shiva. In the *matrikachakra* system, the two principles conjoin. This is the source of emergent creativity in the Universe.

The Vedas conceived '*rajas*' as the primordial movement of existence that is the source of creativity. It is visible to human beings in the form of the dust particle (*rajamsha*) which is always in vibratory motion and clearly visible in the light rays. *Rajas* is responsible for rhythmic movement in the Universe. When opposite poles of *rajas* (light / darkness; day / light) are created; an oscillatory movement ensues between the two poles. The *Pranapana Sutra* (Rig Veda Sutra 6. 44-64,) mentions the twin forces of *rajas* as *prana* and *apana* (expansion and contraction), *vriddhi* and *hrasa* (growth and decay), *udaya* and *pralaya* (manifestation and dissolution); *udgrabha* and *nigrabha* (ascent and descent) of a *chakra*. The cosmic rhythm of *rajas* is manifested as in-breath and out-breath like the rays emitted from a pulsating centre. This underlying rhythm of life and cosmos is termed *udgitha* (*Udgitha Sutra*, Sutra 7, 65-75) which is a cyclic oscillatory movement (*prasartate chakramidam sadaiva*). At every level of the universe, *pranic* vibration unfolds through this bifurcation and rhythmic motion in the universe. *Chhandas*, the rhythm is omnipresent. The *unmesha* and *nimesha* (opening and closing of the eye-lids), *uchchavasa* and *nishsvasa* (in breath/ out-breath) in the two nostrils testify to the rhythmic structure of the universe.

I feel the '*Spanda*' doctrine itself seems to be an improvement over Vedic cosmogony. *Spanda* too denotes an egg-principle which is higher than even *ananda*. *Spanda* contains the seeds of cosmic manifestation and holds all other eggs in its womb.

It is apparent that the ideas of primordial a-temporal vibration, rhythm of *Spanda Shastras* have their earlier roots in the *rajo-vada* doctrine in the Rig Veda.

The *Shatpatha Brahmana* proposes the doctrine of the five eggs, *panch-anda vidya*. Whenever there is a creative manifestation, there exists the *anda* principle (egg principle). The Five Eggs in the Vedic texts are named, *retanda, mukhyanda, yasanda, poshanda, prananda. Prithvi* corresponds to *mukhyanda* (material manifestation). *Surya* corresponds to *yasanda*. Out of the *surya* principle, *vijana* (the higher) is created. Chandra corresponds to *retanda. Vayu* corresponds to *poshanda*. It is *vayu* that links earlier three Viz. earth, sun and lunar spheres. Higher than *vijana* (*surya*) is '*ananda*' which is eternal and the ultimate end of all creation.

The Kashimr Shaivities modified the egg-principle of Vedas to incorporate in their own doctrine. Abhinavagupta discussed the *andachatushtaya*, four *anda*s, in the cosmic scheme of evolution viz. *shaktyanda, mayanda, prakrtyanda, prthvyanda. Shaktyanda* holds the other three in the womb and is the basis of all. Incorporation of four-egg principle in the doctrine might have been done as a correspondence to the chatushyapada structure (3+1) that recurs in each aspect and hierarchy of cosmic evolution in Kashimr Shaivism.

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Gaudapada, Shankaracarya and the *Spanda* doctrine

Natalia Isayeva has done an extremely interesting study on influence of Gaudapada and Bhartrihari on Kashmir Shaivism in the book, *From Early Vedanta to Kashmir Shaivism* (SUNY, 1995) and concluded that Gaudapada, the grand-teacher of Shankaracarya should be regarded as "predecessor of certain schools of non-dualistic Kashmir Shaivism. Gaudapada upheld the creative and dynamic nature of the Reality that leads to the emergence of a structured universe. He even seems to be the link who adopted Buddhist ideas in the Vedanta and developed the doctrine of '*ajativada*' (no-origination). Gaudapada unified the dynamic *spanda* doctrine found in the Vedas with the *Vijana* doctrine of Buddhism in his commentary on *Mandukya Upanishad*, the *Mandukya Karika*. It is plausible that many of the Buddhist ideas like *apoha* (discrimination), primacy of consciousness and *shunyavada* creeped into the non-dual schools of Kashmir Shaivism through Gaudapada who had a substantial influence over Shankara's Advaita philosophy. It is interesting to note that the term '*spanda*' recurs throughout in the *Mandukya-karika*. 48th, 49th, 51st and 72nd verse of IVth Chapter (*Alatasanti-Prakerana*) discusses the '*spanda*' principle. Gaudapada describes the appearance of phenomena when *vijana* (consciousness) is in *spanda*. The 72nd verse aptly describes the *spanda* principle. The duality of subject and object is mere creation of *spanda* principle in consciousness.

Gaudapada discussed elaborately on nature of consciousness in the first chapter, *Agama Prakarana* and reiterates the four-*pada* principle in describing various avastha of consciousness that leads to ultimate liberation. The first three states are wakefulness, dreaming, and deep sleep while the fourth is unnamed, without attribute, mere number four, *turiya*. This fourth state is the state of *advaita*, the non-duality. It is symbolized by a dot, *bindu*, in the phonetic system. Gaudapada put Om as having four-fold structure (*chatushya-pada*) signifying Brahman. Since, Shankaracarya (788-820 A.D.) visited Kashmir, and is credited with rolling back Buddhism in India by appropriating Buddhist categories in Vedanta, his influence over sprouting of non-dual school of Shaivism in Kashmir is likely to be significant. Most of the writers try to show difference between Shankara's Vedanta and non-dual Kashmir Shaivism by pitting the highest principle, Brahman as inactive in Advaita Vedanta while *anuttara* as dynamic, *svatantra*, self-aware and creative . This is a misconception created by western commentators. We have seen how the root of dynamic and creative first principle can be traced as far as in the *Rajovada* doctrine of Vedas. Even the term '*spanda*' was liberally used by the founder of Advaita Vedanta, Gaudapada in his *Mandukya-karika*s.

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Some try to drive a wedge between even Gaudapada and Shankara on the nature of Brahman. But Shankara attributes vibration as well as light as the aspects of Brahman. The idea of *vimarsha* and *prakasha* in *Spanda* School reiterates Shankara's espousal. Verse 39 of the *Brahmasutra* mentions '*kampanat*' (vibration) as verily Brahman and verse 40 is devoted to the light aspect of Brahman (*jyotidarshanat*). Shankara has written extensive commentary on the *Brahmasutra*s and it is in this very commentary that he propounds the concept of non-duality in Vedanta philosophy. Shankara frequently mentions that the way to liberation lies in meditating on 'OM' which the *Mandukya Upanishad* states to be Brahman itself. Om is called *udgitha* in the Vedas and Brahman, the highest non-dual Absolute is often eulogized as '*udgitha*'. *Udgitha* in the Vedas connotes the underlying cosmic rhythm, the expansion and contraction, a *chakra*-movement. The dynamic nature of Brahman and the ceaseless rhythmic and ordered creativity is ascribed as the nature of Brahman in the Advaita Vedanta as much as in non-dualist Kashmir Shaivism. It is not merely a coincidence that the very first verse of the *Mandukya Upanishad* mentions the letter Om as everything. Whatsoever exists in time (past, present, future) or beyond time is also verily Om. Both Gaudapada as well as Shankara wrote commentaries on this short Upanishad. What a better example to reveal the commonality of two traditions than the importance attached to *Shrividya* in both schools.

Science and *Spanda*: The Road Ahead

As discussed in the beginning of the article, there is a race for dominance of two paradigms. *Spanda* is a doctrine where the two conflicting paradigms can attain synthesis. The sonic nature of universe is getting unraveled at an amazing pace. There is sound in every motion at every scale. Our senses can hear only a short range of sound (between 20 Hz.to 20,000 Hz.). What is not audible to us is audible sound for other species. While elephant can hear lower frequency sound (below 20 Hz. in the range of infrasound) than us, bats can hear ultrasound. Dr. Valdimir Gavreau, a French robotic engineer built a huge instrument that emitted infrasound between 3 & 7 Hz. The whole building where the experiment was being conducted began to shake abruptly. He and his team experienced violent shaking of their body cavities and they felt ill for weeks afterward. Infrasound can cause permanent damage to various organs of our bodies. Our organs have different resonant frequencies. Our eyes can vibrate at 16 Hz. That may cause inner visualization or phantom seeing. The full body vibration can occur at 2 Hz. *Japa* of mantras does produce low frequency sound causing physiological effect over body. Body organs can begin to tremble and shake if the resonant frequencies of organs are continually produced. A practioner can vouchsafe efficacy of *Omkara japa* that may induce full body trembling. Words are therefore not merely sounds. Words and sounds affect our body and mind. The lower the vibration, the lower is the frequency and greater is the intensity of its effect on our physiology. One can imagine the effect of *nada* / *paravak*, which correspond to *spanda*, a-temporal vibration over our body and mind. The growing field of bio-resonance will open up the vista to decipher the connections between *vak* and material world.

Science will soon be incorporating *kundalini* in mathematical formulations. *Kundalini* in the *Spanda Shastra* is the presence of *paravak* and lies dormant like a snake with three and half-coils in the base of the spinal cord represented as mathematical triangle, again a triad.

Scientists have found a correlation between warm touch and release of the hormone, oxytocin. Oxytocin is produced in body when a sucking toddler stimulates nipples that send signal to brain and muscles activate secreting breast milk. During labour pain, oxytocin is produced that induces rhythmic pulsation of muscles and delivery of the body. During orgasm, the amount of oxytocin in blood is found to be higher. Oxytocin causes erection in rats. It can be seen that oxytocin induces rhythmic pulsation of muscles that causes thrust movement and helps in secretion. Soft kindling is responsible for production of oxytocin. Oxytocin is found to be the root hormone responsible for feeling of love and empathy.

Mantra recitation kindles the brain and may cause secretion of oxytocin. Expansion and contraction of muscles in forehead, *unmesha* and *nimesha* of eyelids during deep mantra recitation and contemplation may be caused by secretion of oxytocin. But, rhythmic pulsation of muscles always has a finale in secretion. It is possible that there may be certain internal secretions as described in yogic traditions. Secretions are the *rasa*. '*Shanta rasa*' and delight is produced by prescribed methods of self-awareness which cause kindling and triggers bio-chemical cascade. But, most interesting developments are still to come. Science will soon be incorporating esoteric concepts like *kundalini* in mathematical formulations. *Kundalini* in the *Spanda Shastra* is the presence of *paravak* within human bodies and lies dormant like a snake with three and half-coils in the base of the spinal cord represented as mathematical triangle, again a triad. The *Shiva Sutras* exhort an aspirant to unfold the dormant *kundalini* so that it reaches the highest point, *sahasrara*, in the cerebral region. The unfolding is done by either grace of God or guru and constant practice is required.

Now, a team of mathematicians has presented a two-dimensional geometry of biological time (Francis Bailly, Giuseppe Longo, Mael Montevil: *A 2-Dimensional Geometry of Biological Time*, April, 2010, National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris). Time (*kala*) the signifier of the succession (*krama*) has always been represented in single dimension as linear time in physical process. But, it is not sufficient to understand key phenomena of biology since rhythm is ubiquitous in biology and there is no corresponding phenomena measured by physical clock that is based on frequencies along with the linear time.

By incorporating temporality associated with external as well as internal rhythm in biological beings, the team has suggested representation of biological time by a two-dimensional geometry. The rhythm in biological system leads to certain non-changing properties. Mean number of heartbeat or respiration during life time is invariant among mammals where as in pure physical system it should have been proportional to life-span. These rhythms are not temporal rhythm or cycle as they are self-recurring of which total number is fixed independently from temporally physical life span. This fact corresponds very closely to *spanda* as a-temporal vibration, as rhythm not governed by *krama* (succession) i.e. time. Surprisingly, the geometry of two dimensional biological times produces a "second order helix". But, there is another level of rhythmicity in existence that operates at the level of 'consciousness'. I am certain that three-dimensional time in a three-dimensional space will produce the *kundalini* like geometrical structure. A-temporal *kundalini* contains the power to govern three layers of existence -- physical, biological and consciousness. Is it not possible to fuse the *Spanda* prinicple with physics and mathematics with the tools at mankind's disposal?

Now that, leading inter-disciplinary scientists like Stuart A. Kauffman are propounding the idea of "ceaseless creativity in the natural universe as God" (*Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason and Religion,* 2007), shouldn't we attempt to fuse the doctrine of ceaseless creativity in the Universe with the ideas of leading-edge scientific thinker of our time? The *Spanda* doctrine that emanated from a complex transaction of concepts from various schools of thought and practice holds in its womb coming fusion of sacred and scientific knowledge!

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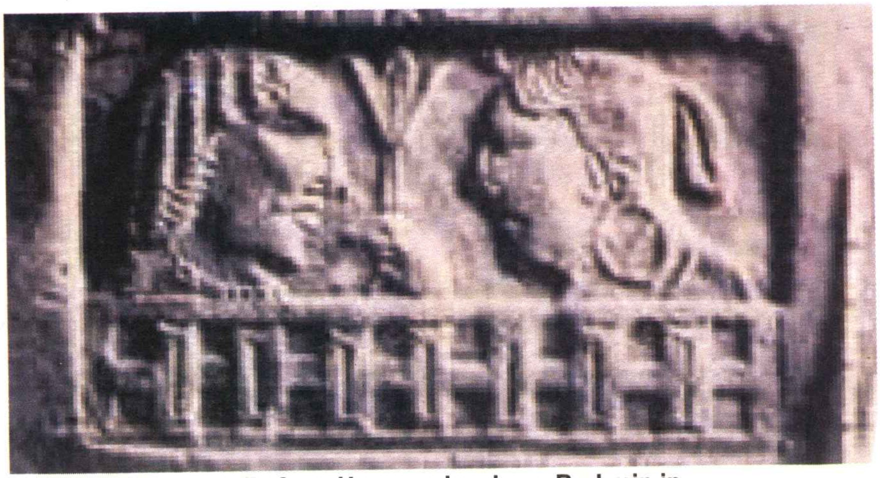
Culture

Society in Ancient And Early Medieval Kashmir- I

S. S. Toshkhani

What kind of a social life did people lead in ancient and early medieval Kashmir? How was the society structured and organized? What were its institutions, traditions, belief systems, its cultural practices? What were the shared values and ideals that shaped the psyche of the people and guided their thinking and behaviour, the processes of social dynamics that influenced their social norms and ethical attitudes? To know this in full and exact detail we have only scattered and fragmentary sources of information available to us. In spite of some valuable pioneering studies by scholars like Ved Kumari Ghai, S. C. Ray and Ajay Mitra Shastri on the basis of extant literary evidences, this has remained a much ignored and unexplored field of investigation. The fact is that the area covered though important is not extensive enough to give us a coherent, clear and well connected picture of Kashmiri social and cultural life in our period that constitutes Kashmir's cultural and historical past. The scope is further constricted by the fact that the evidence that the pioneering scholars have made available to us suffers from limitations arising from a certain lack of perspective and the selective and reductive approach borrowed from Western colonial discourse and modern Marxist historians in interpretation of ancient texts and representative myths.



A tile from Harwan showing a Brahmin in conversation with probably a Greek

The immediate necessity, therefore, is to avoid the pitfalls of an approach based on manipulative agendas and deliberate distortion of facts to suit ideological compulsions. Tracing the trajectory of the evolution of Kashmiri society from the earliest to early medieval times, and to get authentic and verifiable information about how Kashmiris lived, thought, acted and felt collectively in this period demands a rigrous multidisciplinary investigation involving cross-checking and correlating of literary evidence with archaeological and other evidences. The task is enormous and challenging even as it is fascinating and in piecing together the information we are able to lay our hands upon, we have tried give weight to actual facts of history, though in interpreting these facts we cannot altogether rule out the role of conjecture at certain places.

Though ethnographic analysis of the people who inhabited Kashmir in the early period of its history is not our exact concern here, we must be clear in mind that the society that evolved in the process of their settlement was by no means homogenous or constituted of any exclusive ethnic group or tribe. Massive demographic movements were taking place at that time in Kashmir as in many other parts of the world with several racial groups converging on the valley after the sage Kashyapa, preceptor and progenitor par excellence, had drained the waters of the primordial lake that occupied its area and taken the initiative to populate it. The myth of Kashmir's emergence from water, as given in the Nialamata Purana, a Sanskrit text of the 6th or 7th century, suggests that Nagas, who were its original in habitants, mixed with the 'descendants of Manu' (Vedic Aryans) and Pishachas here, along with several other tribes belonging to the adjoining areas, to give shape to this society. Commemorating their mixing and commingling, the Nilamata, mentions the religious instructions of the Naga king Nila that they were required to follow to live in peace and harmony with each other and with their beautiful natural surroundings. The Purana, preserving memories of this coming together of various peoples in a distant pre-historic past, throws a flood of light on the religious and cultural practices that the ancient Kashmiris observed. It also provides valuable information about the various strands that formed the weave of the colourful social fabric that came into being as a result of this interchange.

The myth of Kashmir's emergence from water, as given in the Nialamata Purana, is that Nagas were its original inhabitants, mixed with the 'descendants of Manu' (Vedic Aryans) and Pishachas, along with several other tribes to give shape to this society.

However, a hiccup threatened to disrupt the whole process of this integration even before it eventually took shape. Claiming privileges as the original inhabitants of the land, the Nagaas expressed some initial reluctance to live together with the 'descendants of Manu'. They immediately had second thoughts when Kashyapa gave them the option of having to live with the "terrible" Pishachas. In the end, we find that all the ethnic groups that formed the constituents of the early Kashmiri society, living together in a spirit of harmony and cordiality, following the instructions of the Naga king Nila. These instructions, as we see, consisted of certain rites and rituals and ceremonies, which for the most part are quite similar to those prescribed in other Puranas, excepting a few rites exclusively related to Naga worship. The Nilamata Purana is a record of people having various ethnic affiliations coming together, meeting, mixing, integrating, merging their individual identities with each other in a process that must have taken centuries of accommodation, assimilation and acculturation. But this one episode of initial unwillingness shown by the Nagas to accommodate Vedic Aryans has been blown out of proportion to present it as a gory struggle for domination bringing in the outdated and rejected Aryan Invasion theory of colonial historians and the conflict theory of the Marxists. Supporters of this view, and there are quite a few of them, have shown, a la Romila Thapar and her ilk, the Aryans as ruthless "alien" oppressors who annihilated the original inhabitants of Kashmir. Yet the Nilamata is not even remotely suggestive of any such conflict or tension. It shows Vishnu giving shelter to the Nagas fleeing from the wrath of Garuda, their archenemy, on the mountains surrounding the Kashmir Valley. In no way does it read like a document of war but of compromise and reconciliation, of the birth of a unique civilization on the banks of the Vitasta.

The admixture of ethnic groups and communities that we find peopling Kashmir during the era covered by the Nilamata is not confined to Nagas, Manavas and Pishachas alone, it comprises many other racial communities also like "the Darvas, the Abhisaras, the Juhundras, the Shakas, the Khasas, the Tanganas, the Mandvas, the Madras, the Antargiris and the Bahirgiris". As far as Nagas are concerned, their identification is still causing a problem despite profuse references to them in literary texts and folklore and their prolific representation in art. Whether they were a human tribe of serpent worshippers or mythical beings or serpents as such worshipped for the fear of their venomous fangs, is a question that has not been finally answered. In the Nilamata they appear both in their legendary character as serpent deities worshipped by the local populace and as the original inhabitants of Kashmir. The question is if the Naga cult had such a wide following in the entire country and if the Nagas had such a powerful presence as a historical people (in Kashmir an entire royal dynasty is named after the Naga deity Karkota), why did they have no language or literature of their own? Could it be because they were an Aryan tribe or a proto-Aryan tribe living on the fringes of the society that eventually entered the Aryan fold? Has Kashyapa not been shown as their progenitor also?

Whatever the case may be, the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir according to archaeological explorations were the Neolithic pit-dwellers of Burzahom, a village not far from Srinagar, and several other sites in southern Kashmir like Gofakral, Semthan, Begargund, Olchibag, Panzgom, Sombur, Haripariगom, Thajiwor etc. The Neolithic period in the Valley is said to have flourished from 2300 B.C. to the 2nd century C. E. But as the archaeological data from Burzahom has not been systematically analyzed and studied, nothing can be authentically said about the ethnicity or social organization of the Neolithic pit-dwellers, though some have tried to link them to the Indus Valley people and their culture.

Social Organization:

The question of ethnic composition of the Kashmiri society needs a more thorough and rigrous investigation and can be finally decided after a systematic anthropological study of the Valley's present population alone. Let us now come to the social structure and organization of the society during the period under review. The society, we find, was not rigidly stratified even though the Brahmans occupied the top position in the caste hierarchy. But before we discuss that, it will be relevant to refer to the story of immigration of Brahmans from Aryadesha, given in the Nilamata Purana, who followed Chandradeva, the first settler belonging to that caste. It is largely possible that a bulk of these immigrant Brahmans from the Saraswati valley to which they originally belonged. They must have decided to migrate to Kashmir after the legendary river Saraswati changed its course and eventually disappeared. There is a persistent and strong tradition among Kashmiri Pandits that they are Saraswat Brahmans and the presence of a large number of Vedic words in the Kashmiri vocabulary seems to confirm it. The belief is further reinforced by the fact that it is customary amongst them to remember both, Saraswati the goddess and Saraswati the river, during their wedding ceremonies, chanting hymns in their praise.

There is a persistent and strong tradition among Kashmiri Pandits that they are Saraswat Brahmans and the presence of a large number of Vedic words in the Kashmiri vocabulary seems to confirm it. They remember both, Saraswati the goddess and Saraswati the river, during their wedding ceremonies.

From accounts given in the Nilamata and Rajatarangini, Brahmans seem to have emerged as the dominant and most respected social group not just because they were associated with the performance of religious rites and rituals, but because of being the custodians of the learned tradition. They were an intellectual class who prized learning above everything else. And indeed it is because of their intellectual proclivities and their contributions in the cultural field that Kashmir came to be known all over the world as a great seat of Sanskrit learning. In the ancient texts referred to above they have been described as people "engaged in self-study, contemplation, performance of sacrifice, penance and the study of Vedas and Vedangas". If they were shown respect in the society it was because of they were supposed to be "*itihasavidah*" and "*kalavidah*", that is knowers of history and connoisseurs of art. As for their proficiency in historiography who can provide a better proof than Kalhana the author of Rajatarangini and the whole host of chroniclers who followed him, viz. Jonaraja, Shrivara, Prajaybhatta and Shuka. Brahmans were also required to have a thorough grounding in the six schools of philosophy, astrology and astronomy, grammar, prosody, logic and medicine , besides liturgical texts. They were supposed to live an austere life and adhere to a high moral code. Yet they have been stereotyped by colonial and Marxist historians as representatives of an oppressive and exploitative class out to grow rich on the gifts given to them for performing rituals.

Not all Brahmans were priests by profession, however, and their high position in the society was manly due to their intellectual and scholarly pre-occupations. They also worked as *kathavachaka*s or narrators of Puranic stories, astrologers, *vaidya*s or physicians, teachers and also agriculturists. Some of them held administrative positions and became councilors and ministers with some like, Kalhana's own father Champaka having adopted a military career.

What about the other castes? If Dr. S.C. Ray is to be believed, there were no immediate castes in Kashmir, not even Shudras. "Though the conception of the population as consisting of the four traditional castes was not altogether unknown", he writes, "there was no such caste as Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra in early

Kashmir." While he describes the Brahmanas as "definitely the most privileged and honoured caste", he mentions Nishadas, Kiratas, Dombas, Shvapakas and Chandalas as the lower castes. Dr. Ray's view appears to be only partially true. The Nisahdas, the Kiratas, the Dombas etc. were no doubt there, but the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas were not altogether absent. Describing the functions of all the four traditional castes, the Nilamata says that representatives of all the four castes participated in the king's coronation. The Rjatarangini also makes specific references to Kshatriyas as well as Vaishyas in the context of Kashmir's ancient history. There is no reference in it of any particular tensions between the castes, nor anything like the priest-king collision to maintain hegemony over others. The Brahmans are, however, shown as resorting to prayopavesha or hunger strike to get their demands accepted by the king. The confrontation between King Jayapida and the Brahmans of Tulamula is a well-known example.

There may not be any direct references to Vaishyas as such in the Rajatarangini and other early works, but Kalhana does mention the emergence of a rich and prosperous merchant class. With the opening of overland trade routes during Kanishka's rule, and perhaps even earlier, trade and commerce with foreign countries seems to have received a boost. Commercial activity must have been particularly brisk during the rule of the Karkota kings also. Extensive conquests by kings like Lalitaditya must have opened vast markets for Kashmiri goods in neighbouring territories. The valley was full of wealthy merchants, says Kalhana, with some of living in palatial buildings excelling the king's palace. Damodargupta's reference to *shreshthin*s and *vanika*s also indicates the existence of a rich and prosperous trading community during his time, belonging most probably to the Vaishya caste. Many among the upward mobile artisan classes too must have been counted as belonging to this community.

However, the division of the early Kashmiri society into the four castes and their sub-castes was notional only. The reality on the ground was different where the class system was never so rigid in Kashmir or of a tyrannical character.

As for the Shudras, Nilamata counts the *karmajivin* (workers) and *shilpin* (artisans) as Shudras, that is, the weavers, carpenters, goldsmiths, silversmiths and blacksmiths, leather tanners and potters. They were treated with some respect in the society an dwere among those who exchanged gifts with the higher *varna*s during the Mahimana celebrations, writes Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai. Servants serving in the houses of the higher castes too belonged to the caste. They were treated with sympathy and were included in the list of the persons "in whose company the householder feasted and enjoyed". The very fact, writes Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai, that the Nilamata describes the Shudras as taking part in the coronation ceremony of the king shows that they were not debased.

Dr. S.C. Ray counts the Nishadas, Kiratas, Dombas etc. as low caste people, but stops short of calling them Shudras. The Nishadas, who lived by hunting and fishing, are also described as boatmen in the Rajatarangini. The Kiratas, who were hunters and animal trappers, were a forest dwelling tribe belonging to the Tibeto- Burman racial stock. The Dombas have been associated in Rajatarangini with the Chandalas as huntsmen belonging to the menial class. Kalhana calls them *shvapaka*s or the "dog-eating people". But they have also been shown as good musicians who made quite a profession of their singing and dancing. Kalhana mentions the story of a Domba singer Ranga whose daughters gave a scintillating performance in the glittering assembly and were included in the Chakravarman's seraglio, one of them even becoming the chief queen. Consequently, Dombas became the favourites of the king and wielded much influence at his court. The Chandalas were bravos and fierce fighters who worked as executioners and were also employed as the king's watchmen.

They were people belonging to the mixed castes also like the Sutas, Magdhas and Vandis, who lived by singing the paeans of heroes, warriors and famous people. However, the division of the early Kashmiri society into the four castes and their sub-castes was notional only. The reality on the ground was different where the class system was never so rigid in Kashmir or of a tyrannical character. Intermarriages between various castes were not uncommon, as we learn from literary works like

Kathasaritsagara. It is not therefore relevant to talk of caste stratification as far as Kashmir is concerned. The *jajmani* system helped integrating the "various caste groups in a locality into a well-knit community" and did not favour the priestly class alone. The society in Kashmir was actually divided along occupational and socio-economic lines though caste was not always confined to traditional occupations. Writes Dr. S. C. Ray: "The distinct classes evolved, along with their sub-divisions, on the basis of three principal methods of production (agriculture, industry and trade)." While agriculturists constituted the bulk of these occupational classes, artisans and merchants too had important roles to play in the society. It seems that cultivators had a certain share in the lands they tilled and harvested, but it cannot be said with certainty whether they owned them also or not. The fact that they participated in the joyful festivals related to agriculture during the Nilamata era shows that they were largely owners of the lands they tilled

While agricultural and trading communities were very important elements in the society from the socio-economic point of view, the artisan classes also witnessed a significant growth in their size in early Kashmir.

The Merchant Class:

Merchants formed another important and influential section of the society and probably belonged to the Vaishya caste. Kalhana, as we have already said, has shown them living in great affluence. Right from the Kushana period or even earlier Kashmir's trade and commercial ties with the neighbouring regions appear to have been quite strong. By the time the Karkotas rose to power, an extensive export market became available for Kashmir goods, which presumably included raw wool and woolen fabrics, hides and skins as well as leather articles, fruits and, the most important of them all, saffron. Among the articles of import salt seems to be the most important. Silk, which was imported from the neighbouring China, vermilion, asfoetida, and several other spices, and coral imported probably from the western regions, were probably the other imported items. The flourishing trade made it possible for the wealthy merchant class to gain social ascendancy. In Damodara's Kuttinimata Kavya the *shreshthin and vanikas* are shown living in great luxury and patronizing theatre houses. However, their importance began to decline when the overland trade routes were closed and trade became more of an internalized affair. The increased dependence on agricultural lands for revenue gave rise to the emergence of a new class of landed aristocracy known as Damaras who started gaining control of agricultural economy from the 8th century. As their wealth and influence increased they started interfering in the affairs of the state and often became a severe headache for the rulers. At the same time they acquired the position of a status class in the society with even the rulers seeking their help and royal families even establishing matrimonial relations with them.

While agricultural and trading communities were very important elements in the society from the socio-economic point of view, the artisan classes also witnessed a significant growth in their size in early Kashmir. They included the weavers and the jewelers, metal casters and image-makers, potters and carpenters, blacksmiths and leather tanners etc. Although their sphere of activity was quite wide, there were no separate traders' guilds in Kashmir as in other parts of India.

Besides the above, there were occupational communities, which served the society in various other ways. Among these could be counted the wrestlers, the actors, the dancers, the physicians, the shepherds, the gardeners as well as the courtesans who plied the world's oldest trade. These people were not directly connected with production of wealth, but nonetheless had their own place in the society.

The Administrative Class:

Another class, which did not produce wealth directly but distinguished itself from all other classes, was that of the administrators. It consisted of the nobility and the bureaucracy. The highest civil and military officials, as pointed out by Ray, were drawn from the nobility. These included the *sarvadhikara* (also called *dhisachiva*) or prime minister, *sachiva* or minister, *mandaladesha* or governor and *kampanesha* or army chief. Being important officers of the state, the nobility drew large salaries from the royal treasury.

The bureaucracy assisted them in running the general administration of the state. . it consisted of various officials, both high and low, all being known by the general cover term *kayastha*. The term did not denote any particular caste. Members of any caste or class could be employed as *kayastha*s, including the Brahmans. Both Kalhana and Kshemendra have for their excessive greed and for their cruel methods of exacting taxes from the common people. Kshemendra has given a long list of their designations in his works *Narmamala* and *Samayamatrika*. Describing them as exploitative, oppressive and corrupt, he exposes their fraudulent ways and bungling and accuses them of forgery, deceit, misappropriation and embezzlement. Kalhana too speaks of them with disdain. But all *kayasthas* can not be painted with the same brush. As officials were essential to run the administration, the importance of their role cannot be ignored.

Position of Women:

Though the society was essentially patriarchal and gender roles were determined on that basis with men as the breadwinners and women as housekeepers, one of its unique, and consequently most surprising, features was the relative freedom of movement and activity that women enjoyed in that age. The picture one gets of their life from various literary sources is one of happy participation in different spheres of social activity rather than of servitude or deprivation. Though under the protective umbrella of the family and within the limits of cultural tradition, they occupied a pivotal place in the society and moved bout with unfettered freedom. There was no attempt to marginalize them or deculturize their personality, as was being done in other contemporary societies in the world. There was no restriction on the movement of women, nor were any irrational curbs imposed on their activity. In the age of the Nilamata and in many centuries to follow, female seclusion practically was unknown. Participating joyfully in the numerous festivals prescribed in the Nilmata Purana, they would go to the gardens in the company of their men-folk without any inhibition or fear. For instance during the *Iramanjari Utsava*, they would freely sport with men under the boughs of the shrubs, exchanging flowers and flower garlands in a spirit of gay abandon. On the Ashokikashtami day, they would go to fruit gardens and worship fruit bearing trees. Such was the spirit of the times that during the *Shravani Utsava* young women were enjoined upon to go and enjoy water sports.

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While these outdoor festivals showed that women were not confined to the four walls of the home, there were numerous indoor festivals too in which their participation was an essential feature. One such festival was the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* or the Festival of the Full Moon women would sit with their husbands and children watching the beauty of the moonlit night. Then there was *Madana Tryodashi*, a festival dedicated to Kamadeva, the god of love, when a husband would demonstrate his love for his wife by personally giving her a bath with the water scented by herbs. Similarly, towards the end of the three-day Mahimana celebrations well-adorned ladies would freely and joyfully frolic with men. There were also special occasions like the full moon day of Margashirsha (January-February) when the householder is enjoined by the Nilamata Purana to invite his sister, paternal aunt and a friend's wife, besides a Brahman lady and honour them with gifts of new clothes. Presenting of gifts to a friend's wife – that could happen only in a free society that Kashmir had in early times.

Coming to religious rituals and ceremonies, the presence and participation of women was regarded as essential. And that is how things should have been in a society where people regarded their native land an embodiment of Uma, the Great Goddess herself. Thi sis significant for it shows that the Mother Goddess cult has occupied a central place in the religious beliefs of Kashmiri Hindus from very early times. The wide prevalence of this cult in Kashmir and the popularity of the worship of Uma, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Mahkali, and the local goddesses Ragnya, Sharika, Tripura, all manifestations of Durga, explains the respect that women were shown as an aspect of the divine feminine.

Another significant aspect of the position of women in ancient Kashmiri society was that they had access to good and liberal education. Women received education in literature and the fine arts and were given practical training in music, dance and drama, which were considered as suitable accomplishments for them. Ample evidence for this is provided by Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara, Damodargupta's Kuttinimata Kavya, Bilhana's Vikramankadeva Charit and several other literary works. The great Sanskrit grammarian Panini gives the formation *kathi* for a female student belonging to the Kathaka school of Black Yajurveda to which the Kashmiri Pandits belong. An idea of the curriculum that women studied can be had by from the Kuttinimata Kavya. Going by what it says, a girl was taught a variety of subjects in early medieval times, which included literature, Bharata's Natyasahastra, paintings, aboriculture, cookery, cutwork on leaves (*patrachheda*), vocal and instrumental music etc.

In the political field, several women have played important roles and influenced the course of the state's political history. Kalhana tells us that Queen Yashovati was empowered by Krishna himself and she became the first woman in Kashmir to be enthroned as an independent ruler, even though in the capacity of a regent only. Queens like Didda and Sugandha gave a very impressive account of their administrative acumen, even though the latter did not get a full chance. Several queens like Khadana, Amritprabha, Chakrmardika, Kalyandevi, Ratnadevi and Kamaladevi built shrines, towns and markets. Queen Kalhanika was assigned a delicate diplomatic mission to bring about political rapprochement between Jayasimha and Bhoja.

As for the common woman, we do not know what other avenues were open to her beyond the responsibilities of a homemaker or taking up the profession of a courtesan. A tile from Harwan has the figure of a female water-carrier engraved on it, while there is literary evidence to suggest that women worked as flower sellers also. On the whole, however, it is a happy picture of Kashmiri women's life that emerges from literary sources. Dr. S. C. Ray has drawn our attention to a fact that could prove most significant in the context of women's legal rights in those times. He writes: "Women in Kashmir probably had some property rights and independent legal status." Kalhana in his Rajatarangini and Kshemendra in his Samayaamtrika indicate that a widow inherited her husband's property after his death, rather than his sons. This is something that needs urgent attention of scholars for further research.

Marriage:

Though marriage was the main career open to a woman in early Kashmir, there is no indication of the incidence of pre-puberty marriages. On the contrary, works like Kshemendra's Deshopadesha provide evidence to show that girls were generally married at a mature age. Though fidelity in marriage was regarded as an ideal, polygamy seems to have been quite prevalent among the rich and well to do men. The kings had "seraglios full of queens and concubines". Widows were supposed to live an absolutely austere and highly moral life. Prevalence of *sati* among the royal and rich and aristocratic families points to some of the blemishes that tarred the image of the ancient Kashmiri society.

Prostitution:

We do not come across any example of polyandry in early Kashmir, but prostitution appears to have been quite common. "Although prostitution was tolerated as an inescapable evil, the society looked down upon prostitutes and condemned men indulgent to the in unmistakable terms," writes Ajay Mitra Shastri. Authors like Damodargupta and Kshemendra were closely acquainted with its prevalence and it is from their work that we get a picture of how it corrupted moral life in early medieval times. Damodargupta's Kuttaniamta gives us a peep into the courtesans' mode of behaviour, their proficiency into the fine arts and even literature, their greed for money and the customs connected with their craft. Kshemendra too in his Narmamala, Samayamatrika and Deshopadesha draws detailed and graphic pictures of the prostitutes' life an dexposes the moral laxity that had crept in his contemporary society. Kalhana and Somdeva make references to the system of *devadasi* or dedicating girls to a temple for dancing and singing, that seems to have prevailed in Kashmir from quite early times and could be treated as a form of prostitution.

This discussion about social organization in ancient and early medieval Kashmir is by no means conclusive or complete, but we can safely draw certain inferences. The first and the most important fact that needs to be noted is that is that though there was an awareness of the four traditional castes, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, the early Kashmiri society did not have a rigid form of stratification based on caste. It was rather divided more along occupational lines The Brahmans no doubt formed the most respected social group, but that was more because they followed intellectual pursuits and were custodians of learned tradition than being functional priests performing religious rites and ceremonies. The most important occupational class was that of the agriculturists, followed by the merchants and traders, with the artisans forming various upward mobile classes. There was also the administrative class comprised of the nobility and bureaucracy, which did not produce wealth but held an important status in the society. Referred to under the cover name of Kayasthas or the king's officers, they were engaged in collection of revenue and taxes, but did not belong to any particular caste. Their exploitative and oppressive methods have been severely criticized by writers like Kshemendra and Kalhana. Lastly, women occupied a high position of the society, enjoying freedoms unknown to contemporary societies elsewhere. The rise of the mother goddess cult was also partly responsible for the reverence shown towards women who were looked upon as manifestations of the divine feminine. Women also seemed to possess property rights as indicated by some literary texts.

References

1. Nilamata Purana, Vol. I, ed. Dr. Ved Ghai, vv. 207-208
2. The shloka recited on the occasion is:
3. Nilamata Purana Vol. I, ed. Dr. Ved Ghai, p. 78

   Asyandamana subhage nirgiribbhyo Saraswati /
   Mateva duhitribhyah kulyabhyo vibhaja vasu //

4. Ibid v 632
5. Early history and Culture of Kashmir, p.101
6. Ibid: p. 97
7. Nilamata Purana Vol. II, ed. Dr. Ved Ghai, vv 847-48
8. Rajatarangini, IV, vv 640-653
9. Ibid IV, v 11
10. Kuttanimata Kavya, p. 68
11. Nilamata Purana, Vol. II, vv 735-36
12. Nilamata Purana, Vol. I, p. 86
13. Rajatarangini, VI, v 192
14. Rajatarangini, V, vv 354-396
15. Early History and Culture of Kashmir, p. 101
16. Early History and Culture of Kashmir, p. 111
17. See Dr, Moti Chandra, Kshemendra aur unka Samaj, pp.58-59
18. Nilamata Purana, vv 673-74
19. Ibid v 741
20. Ibid v 86, vv 409-10
21. Ibid v 658
22. Ibid v 524-25
23. Ibid v 458
24. Radha Kumud Mukherji, Women in Ancient India, p.6
25. See Ajay Mishra Shastri, Kuttanimata Kavya of Damodaragupta
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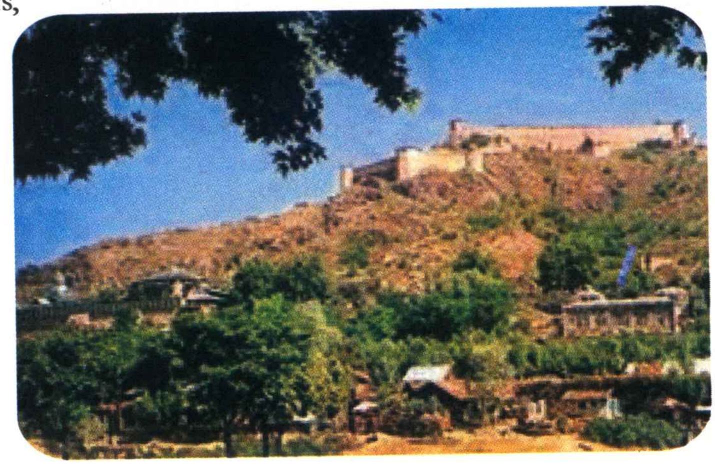
Journey

In Search of Roots

Ayaz Rasool Nazki

(Photographs of Sharada by the author)

Sultan Zainul Abideen popularly known as Budshah, the Great King ruled Kashmir between 1420-1470 AD. Budshah was a kind and benevolent king. His reign was marked by tolerance, amity, brotherhood on one side and overall intellectual, economic and industrial development on the other. He not only encouraged the local talent, be they poets, scholars or artisans and craftsmen; but also brought into Kashmir notables from far and wide. Thus a large number of men of letters, scholarship, art and craft made their abode in the beautiful and happy valley of Budshah. One among these accomplished men was Mir Syed Ali Bukhari, who was known for his scholarship and intellect. Bukhari's descendents continued to live in Kashmir and in due course of time excelled as jurists and the office of Chief Jurist came to stay in the family for a long time. Syed Bukhari's great grandson was Mir Hajji Mohammad Qazi. As fate would have it, he lost his children one after another in infancy till a boy 6th in line was born. Father, fearing for the life of this infant too, took him to Sheikh Hamza, popularly known as Makhdoom Sahib, whose shrine on south western aspect of Hari Parbat continues to draw thousands of devotees till this day. Sheikh Hamza was born in 1494 and he passed away in 1576 AD.


Hari Parbat

Hajji Mohammad Qazi told the Sheikh about his predicament and his desire to give away the little one to Sheikh Hamza as Niyaz (an offering) so that he could by the grace of Sheikh Hamza be spared from the jaws of death. On seeing the little infant presented to him by Hajji Qazi, the saint Sheikh Hamza at first smiled and then turned sad. The frightened father saw another tragedy in this sadness but Sheikh Hamza was quick to clarify. Look: this is the blessed one and I was happy to take him under my patronage but then Peer Dastgeer himself intervened and said "he is my own". That is why I was a bit disappointed for not having him as my disciple. The child grew under the shade of Sheikh Hamza and later on came to be the founder of Qadri Order of Sufis in Kashmir. He was Mir Nazuk Niyazi Qadri, whose shrine is situated at Kadi Kadal in downtown Srinagar. Around the time that Mir Nazuk was growing in stature, an illustrious son of Kashmir came in contact with Sheikh Hamza. He was Datatreya Ganesh Kaul, a wise and respected Kashmiri Pandit. Sheikh's influence was decisive and Ganesh Kaul embraced Sheikh Hamza's creed and was to become the Muslim ancestor of the Fazili clan of Kashmir. Ganesh Kaul lived on the bank of Papchan stream at Gamroo, in Bandipora area of Kashmir and Fazilis although spread to many areas in later days continue to inhabit Gamroo and adjoining villages. About a dozen generations down the line in the two illustrious disciples of Sheikh Hamza, were born Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki, on Mir Nazuk Qadri's side and Aisha Banoo on Datatreya Ganesh Kaul's side. Whereas Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki is well known and it would not be proper or necessary for me to introduce him, Aisha Banoo merits an introduction. She was married to Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki at the age of 13 years and lived about 58 years of married life, till her death in 1980. She carried many traits of her ancestors and was happiest when feeding others. Her home at Beeruni Kathi Darwaza (Chandra Peetham) was a Sarai where every one was welcome. She could not and did not compromise on one thing, education of her children. She was totally devoted to her husband and attached to her Maker. She was a truly remarkable and noble soul. She had given birth to nine children in all, one daughter and eight sons. One among the sons died in childhood. Seven survived. I am sixth. I spent most of my childhood around Hari Parbat hillock, as we lived in its foot hills. The first impressions of my childhood somehow are linked to the hill and I distinctly remember a story I read when I was very young. It was the story of Sharika or Sharada, written by one Iqbal Nath Kaul and published in some literary magazine in Urdu. The story was so fascinating that it got imprinted on my conscious mind and I have over the last decades again and again turned it in my mind. It was indeed a very simple story but equally complex in its reach. Once upon a time Kashmiris found to their utter disbelief that they had overnight lost their speech, the tongue; they could no longer talk, utter a word or communicate with one another. The entire population was grief stricken and did not share their thoughts amongst themselves and, therefore, could not find a way out of this silence that had engulfed them all of a sudden. They began to weep, but only in silence, for no words could come out of their lips. They could only shed tears, but not wail and cry. At last unable to bear the burden of their silence, they abandoned their hutments, their abodes and ran in one direction, crying and weeping, wailing but in silence. Their destination was the Hari Parbat hill. They sat at an open space and went in to a silent prayer, shedding tears instead of words. They continued to prey in the silence of their souls, till at last their prayers were answered. A bird appeared in the skies above and hovered over the congregation. It flew on their heads as if to re-assure them, as if to protect them under its wings. Finally it descended in front of the congregation on to an open space and lo and behold! With its beak, it began inscribing the letters of the lost alphabet on the ground. As it inscribed the first letter, the congregation read it and read it aloud; they had recovered their tongue, their language, their voice. The bird that had descended from the heavens was Sharika the mynah and it had come as the saviour of people. It had turned out to be their teacher, philosopher and guide. Iqbal Nath's story struck roots in my whole being. I was to say the least fascinated by the story. I grew around this story and around Hari Parbat hill.

entnace to sharda

An incident in later years around my boyhood readily comes to my mind. It was about a dream, an apparition, and a vision that I had one night. I saw myself to be on the top of Hari Parbat hill and I saw a walled orchard on the top. There was a door, it was opened the moment I approached it. I went inside and saw a beautiful orchard full of almond trees but the branches on the trees did not bear the almond blossom, but instead carried diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, gems and all precious stones. The radiance from these branches was brilliance par excellence. I saw few twigs and barks dropped to the ground. I started collecting them. While doing so, a fairy appeared in front of me. She was the most beautiful being I could imagine. She spoke directly to me. "Why are you gathering these fallen twigs?" I had no answer. She repeated the question again and then continued. "Why are you gathering these fallen twigs, when the whole orchard belongs to you?" My rendezvous with Hari Parbat continued in the years to come, till finally I had to leave Hari Parbat and the valley. But somehow, the legend of Hari Parbat did not abandon me and it was quite spontaneous that when time came to put a signboard on the gate of my new house at Sidra, Jammu, Hari Parbat came to my lips and is since inscribed on granite.

Sharada Peeth had to come with Hari Parbat. There was no escape from it. I heard it long back, that I shall one day re-trace my steps to Sharada Peeth, the steps of my ancestors, the ancestors of Datatreya Ganesh Koul, the ancestors of his Peer Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom Sahib. I went to Muzaffarabad for the first time in the year 2000. The occasion was the marriage ceremony of a niece of my wife. My wife's sister had been married to a cousin at Muzaffarabad. During this visit, I expressed my desire to visit Sharada but was persuaded not to go on two counts, the road from Muzaffarabad to Sharada was under continuous shelling and therefore never safe; second I was not keeping a very good health.

Kishan Ganga touching Sirra Silla at Shardi

My second visit to Muzaffarabad was in response to devastation caused by the earthquake of 2005. Whereas thousands of people perished in this disaster, my own sister-in-law (my wife's sister) laid down her life while saving hundreds of her school children, she being the Head Mistress. During this visit, there was no scope of moving out of Muzaffarabad, although the desire, the longing kept surfacing again and again I could not even talk about it given the conditions prevailing as that time in Muzaffarabad.

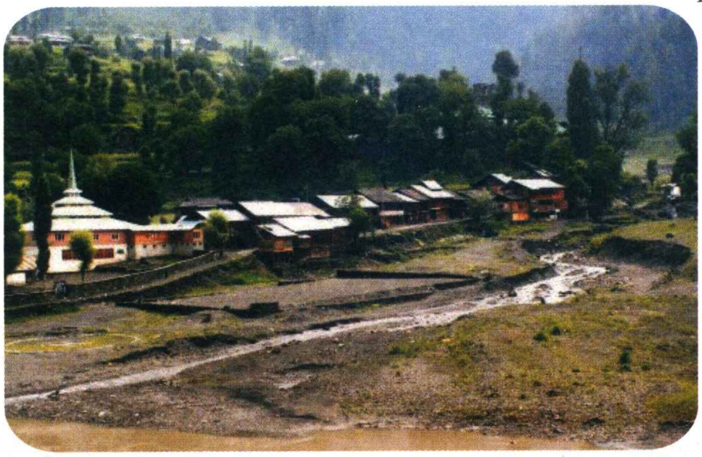
My third and last visit materializedin June 2007, again to attend the marriage of second daughter of the deceased sister-in-law. This time we had to be there by the side of the family. While at Muzaffarabad after completing the ceremonies associated with marriage, I expressed the wish to visit Sharada Peeth and as if by the hand of providence everything seemed to be falling in place and the journey from Muzaffarabad to Sharada was slated for 3rd of July 2007.

River Saraswati

Muzaffarabad is a small city as compared to the city of Srinagar or Jammu. It is situated around the confluence of Jhelum and Kishen Ganga (now Neelam) rivers which flow in to Muzaffarabad from east and north directions respectively. The place is surrounded on all side by huge mountains and as one goes up in the mountains in any direction the surroundings are picturesque and the view of the rivers meandering their way into the spot where they meet is beautiful.

If one goes upstream along the river Jhelum, one can reach Uri and so the valley of Kashmir. The area around Jhelum before it meets Kishen Ganga has been known as Jhelum valley and continues to be known as such. Going upstream along the river Kishen Ganga also takes one to Kashmir valley but on way lies the small village of Sharada. For travel from Muzaffarabad to Sharada, one has to follow the only route available that is the road roughly going along the river Kishen Ganga for most of its course. The left bank of the river while one is going upstream is almost exclusively under Pakistan's occupation whereas the right bank of the river Kishen Ganga exchanges hands here and there between the two countries. As one leaves Muzaffarabad, the steep trek info mountains begins as the road starts gaining height almost immediately on departure from Muzaffarabad, the Kishen Ganga, which is a wide expansive river at Muzaffarabad, becomes thinner and thinner as one climbs up: The road as it gains height also becomes narrower and rough. I was told.that it was in a better condition prior to the earthquake of 2005. The tremors destroyed most of this road as huge mountains suddenly crumbled down and brought heaps of stones and rubble on to the road. I saw the road maintenance work in progress almost everywhere on the road. I was told that the earthquake has destabilized the mountains and, therefore, any stretch of road has to be laid again and again. The Kishen Ganga river roars as its water plunges down on rocks from the heights above in its downward march to Muzaffarabad. It is a sight to be seen as the water turns milky white on account of the churning that goes on. As one gains height, the forest also appears to take a denser and richer look. One can see embankments on the road, and one is informed that these solid embankments were constructed to keep off the bullets that rained ontinuously on the road from across the river before the two countries decided on a complete ceasefire. There are scarcely any populated hamlets or villages that could be seen from the road, barring few hamlets like Patika and then the model township of Teetwal on the Indian side. After Teetwal one reaches the district headquarters of recently carved out Neelam district. This town is called Athmuqam and has a fairly well maintained guest house, a market place, a degree college and other offices, which one can notice of while traveling through. I stopped here for an hour and had lunch at the guest house. This place is around sixty kilometers from Muzaffarabad but takes close to three liours on the road to reach here. One important feature that strikes the visitor to this area is the fashion in which houses'are constructed. I was really surprised to see Buddhist pagoda type of roofs on almost all constructions, new and old alike. It appears that many cultural trends and traits are not wiped off easily even after centuries of change. As one leaves Athmuqam, and begins the travel on the road to Sharada, the surroundings begin to acquire a beauty which is striking. The dense forest, the beautiful Kishen Ganga with its beautiful crystal clear water provide the main features for this extremely pleasing and picturesque landscape. The river goes on increasing in beauty and grandeur. On way one can see the town of Kama on the Indian side and one can call from across the river from Pakistan side and be heard on the Indian side. One can count the chickens in the yard of a farmer on the Indian side from across the border. Anyhow, as Sharada appears, one can sense the change in the air. The Kishen Ganga is no longer the roaring river on rampage. Although in great speed it appears calm and quite. The river's expanse increases as one goes up stream and the forest is now really dense, air cool and slowly but surely one begins to sense energy in the whole surroundings. There is a luminescence that pervades the atmosphere; there is calm, a total calm, as if all elements of nature are in silent prayer or meditation. It is serenity, peace, and solitude that greet you as one enters the land of bliss. It is here that one feels a sense of total well being, total peace and total balance. Even after a day of travel on rugged dusty mountain road, the entire toiling and tiredness vanishes in the air. One feels re-invigorated, revitalized, almost re-bom fresh.

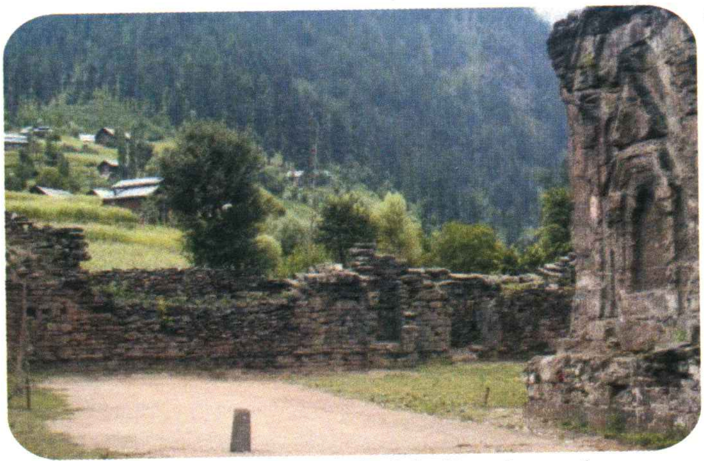
River Saraswati near sangam



Shardi Bazar along River Madhumati

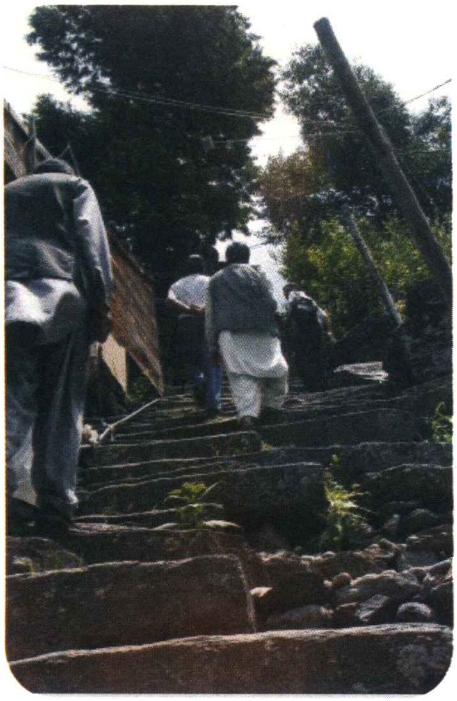
It was almost evening when I touched the ground at Sharada village. I went to the only rest house available in the village. Sharada is now a Tehsil headquarters, the Tehsil is also known as Sharada Tehsil, a part of Neelam district. Sharada Tehsil has a population of about 30,000 people and the village has about 3000 souls. It is a small place; it has a market, a mosque, few government offices and a police station. It has only captive power supply, the diesel generator supplying power for 3 hours in the evening. I took a round of the locality; 1 went up the river to see the confluence of Kishen Ganga with a mighty stream known as Surgan. Here also one can not but experience an unusual spectacle. The mighty Surgan is tamed the moment it touches Kishen Ganga, losing all its violence and turbulence as it joins the river. Another stream, the Madhumati joins the Kishen Ganga about 1 km down stream and it is there that Sharada Peeth is situated. I decided against visiting Sharada Peeth when night had begun to fall around the mountains and trees had taken a darker hue. I returned to the rest house, with the resolve to visit the Sharada Peeth in the morning.

When I retired to my room in the rest house after dinner, I did not know that the night ahead of me was not going to be an ordinary, routine affair, a night in the hills. I had anticipated that I shall go into a deep sleep the moment I hit the bed, owing to the long and arduous travel that I had undertaken during the day. As the diesel generator supplying power to the village went off at 10 PM, the attendant came in and lit a typical kerosene lamp and the mere sight of this appliance reminded me of my childhood in the village when there was no electricity. I did get into the bed, but I couldn't sleep. Sleep had somehow abandoned my senses. I was neither sleepy, nor drowsy, I wasn't tired either. I just didn't want to go into sleep. I wanted to remain awake. Somehow, some power within me was slowly deciding things for me, one thing was certain, it wasn't going to be an ordinary night. I felt and sensed that I was on the threshold of a great experience. I had put out the lantern. It was pitch dark. There was no light anywhere in the room, but I was seeing everything around me. I left my bed and came to the balcony adjoining the room. This small projection was preceded with windows on all sides. I sat in the middle of this place and watched through the windows. There was no moon, but one could see even in the absence of any demonstrable source of light. I was definitely intrigued by this phenomenon and unable to resist the temptation to investigate and explore, I decided to go out on to the lawn outside. My caretaker had warned me that I should not venture out during the night for fear of wild animals. He had taken pains to secure all doors that led to my room; but the warnings simply became meaningless in the new situation. I couldn't stay indoors and so I opened all the three doors that led me out on to the lawn; once on the lawn I straightaway headed towards the river. The lawn and the whole rest house complex was congruous with the river. I reached the bank and found a few wooden benches there. I sat on a bench fixing my gaze on the flowing water of Kishen Ganga. It was an unusual experience which defies narration or explanation. The water appeared to shimmer, to glisten and gleam in the otherwise dark night. The mountains in the distance appeared to reflect some luminescence, some strange light which can't be described in words or reproduced on canvas. By and by, I went into a state of consciousness where many events unfolded of their own accord. My own lack of expression forbids me from venturing in to the forbidden territory. Suffice it to say, that I felt as if I was in the exalted and blessed company of hundreds and thousands of our ancestors who had spent their lives in pursuit of knowledge, in developing the thought persona that we are proud of and shall continue to be proud of for many centuries to come. Night progressed in to early dawn and with the faintest of rays emanating between the cleft formed by two mountains just behind the Kishen Ganga river, the flowing water started unfolding a dance in light and suddenly poet Iqbal's Persian verse which he sang in praise of sunset over Dal lake came to my mind, wherein he claimed to have seen Almighty God unveiled. I set out for Sharada. It was a ten minute drive and then a walk of another ten minutes that brought me face to face with my heritage, with my past, with my roots. There at the foot of Sharada Peeth began the ascent by way of a stone stairway. At the base, someone had put up a sign board detailing Sharada history in his own way. I was told that the board was erected by some individual. The board has the information in Urdu which I translate as follows.


A view of the eastern wall of the Sharada temple

Noted Muslim historian Al Beruni in his book *Kitab-ul-Hind* mentions Sharada in these words'. "Sharada is situated in the south-west of Srinagar. Indians consider the place as extremely holy and on the eve of Baisakhi, people from all over India come to this place on pilgrimage, but due to snow and extremely difficult terrain, I could not visit the place myself."

During the reign of Kanishka I, Sharada was the largest academic institution in the entire region of Central Asia. Side by side with imparting education in Buddhist religion, history, geography, structural science, logic and philosophy subjects were taught to perfection. This University had evolved its own script which resembles Devnagari and was known as Sharada. In conformity with this the present village is also known as Sharada. This building was constructed by Kanishka I during 24 to 27 AD. The Sharada University building was constructed from north to south on a rectangular pedestal. Modern day engineers are overawed by the magnificent work of the structure. This building is different from all other ancient buildings in the

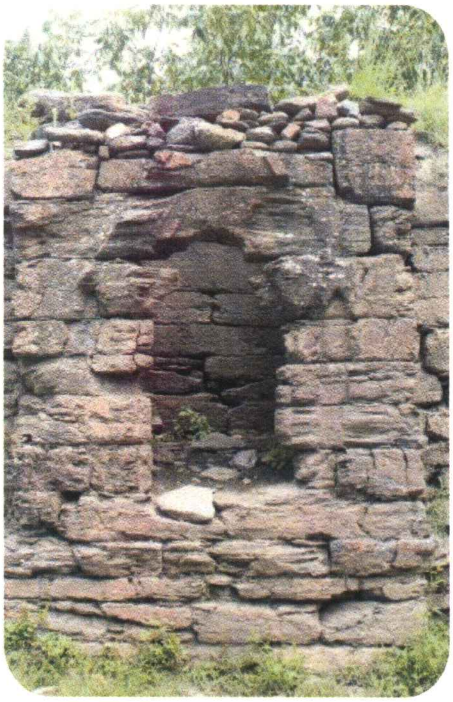


Steps to Sharada temple

subcontinent, in particular the centrally placed sanctum presents a unique style of architecture which is very interesting. It is (was) about hundred feet in height and has (had) carvings on its walls on all sides. There is a door way to its west. There is no trace left of a roof on the top of the structure. However, entry from the west is by means of sixty three steps. Even now some tribals adorn an elephant with a crown made of sixty three ornaments before worshipping it. The number 63 has a religious significance in Asian history. Few figures suggesting Buddhist faith are even now visible on the walls. These have been engraved into the stones. There used to be a pond in the building which does not exist now. People afflicted with skin diseases would bathe in the pond and get cured, because water came to the pond from a sulphur spring situated two kilometers away. Historical references suggest that five thousand individuals resided at Sharada. The entire area between Sharada and Kishan Ghati was populated. Kishen Ghati is the name of a hill situated three kilometers away from the main building at Sharada in the southeast direction, and is considered holy. There used to be a deep cave which had a huge statue inside and dead were cremated under it and the ashes immersed in the Kishan Ganga (presently Neelam river). Majority of people are not aware of the real historical background of Sharada. The building presents the picture of ruin and is a victim of neglect, its academic and instructional importance appear to be only a dream.

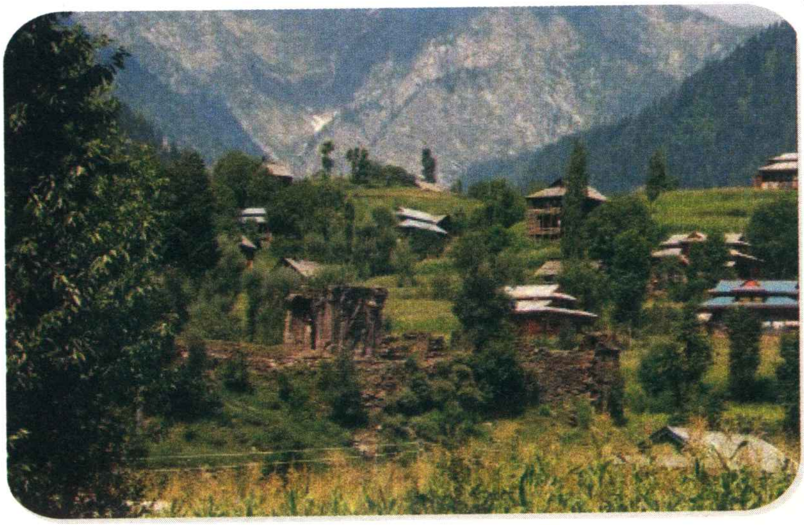
There are in all 63 steps that take one to Sharada Peeth. The stairway is around 10 feet in width and each step is more than a foot in height and 2 to 3 feet deep. In all' about 100 feet height is gained from the surrounding area. There was perhaps a gateway at the start of the stairway, for few massive stones can be seen at the bottom of the stair. Once on the top of the stairway, one can see the left half of an archway still standing whereas the right part of the archway has disappeared. The archway is also made up of chiseled stone and a few geometrical designs roughly forming the facade of a Bhairav temple can be seen outside the archway. From the archway, a peep inside the compound reveals the sanctum sanctatorium in the centre of the compound. Its entry is from the west that is facing the stairway. The temple is almost centrally placed and is surrounded by stone walls on all sides but the stones used for construction of the temple, the stairway and the archway are not the ones which are used for the outer walls. I was told by few people present there that the stone that has been used for the temple is hot found in the area and was perhaps transported from some far away place. This was amazing keeping in view the size and weight of the transported stone slabs. The main temple continues to stand on its own strength. Its three walls are in good condition although door and the roof are missing. I could imagine that the door and roof must have been made of wood and therefore perished with age and neglect. I was happy to see that there were no signs of encroachments over the complex and the place was neat and clean.

The temple is roughly 24*24 feet and about 30 feet in height. The base or the plinth is about 4 feet above the ground. Inside nothing exists, floor is earth filled and no trace of stone slab (*shila*) was visible. However,-what remains under the soil is not known. I did find a patch in the left wall were the original stone slab appears to have been replaced by fragments of different stones. One piece of this filled stone also bears a very faint inscription which though visible could not be read. That these stone pieces could be the remnants of the *shila*, is a distinct possibility and needs further study. An inscription on the left pillar at



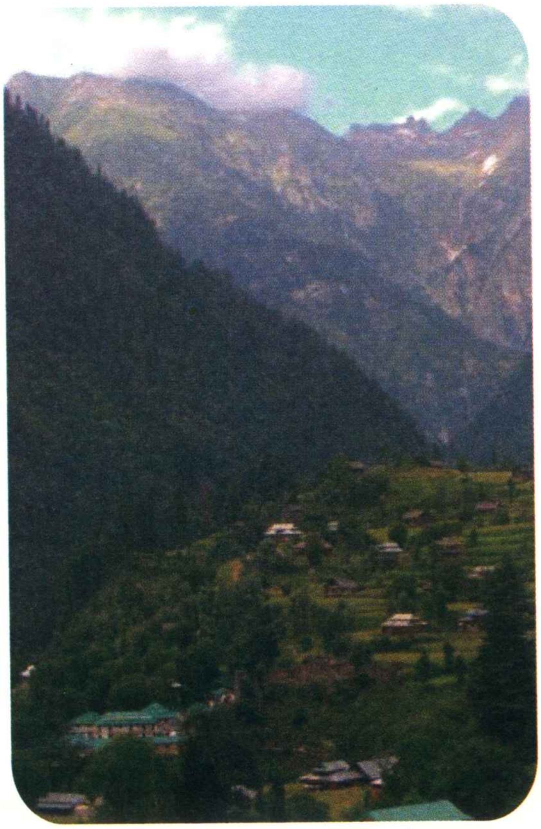
Arch in the middle of the northern wall

the entry of the temple is also visible. I mistook it for Om in the Nagri script. I was later on corrected by my revered sister Bimla Raina that this is Sharada and not the Nagri Om. It appears as is seen in the figure below.



Sharada Temple at Sharada Van

On one side of the compound one can still find remnants of rooms or quarters, I was told that these were the living places of Pujaris in good olden days. There is a tree near the archway and it is also said to be very old. I couldn't identify the tree. The outer compound wall too has small temple like structures without any images or *murtis* in them. The temple or the adjoining walls do not carry any visible engravings or carvings. I could see a lot of moss grown on the walls. I stayed for few hours at the complex and examined it in a detail. It was a very bright morning. I hadn't planned the visit in order to collect any information for public consumption; therefore I did not carry any regular photographic equipment. The visit was basically as a result of a call from within; but I had a mobile phone with camera. I took several snapshots here and there and once I returned to Jammu, I was amazed to see the quality of the pictures. I now realize that I was the first Kashmiri and Indian to travel to Sharada from this side of divide in 60 years. My dream, wherein I was 'told, that the whole orchard is yours came true and I did go in to that orchard which has almond trees and each branch has for blossom, the diamond, emeralds, sapphires and gems, the precious stones of knowledge, wisdom, scholarship and the like.On one side of the compound



Sharada Van and Mount Narda

one can still find remnants of rooms or quarters, I was told that these were the living places of Pujaris in good olden days. There is a tree near the archway and it is also said to be very old. I couldn't identify the tree. The outer compound wall too has small temple like structures without any images or murtis in them. The temple or the adjoining walls do not carry any visible engravings or carvings. I could see a lot of moss grown on the walls. I stayed for few hours at the complex and examined it in a detail. It was a very bright morning. I hadn't planned the visit in order to collect any information for public consumption; therefore I did not carry any regular photographic equipment. The visit was basically as a result of a call from within; but I had a mobile phone with camera. I took several snapshots here and there and once I returned to Jammu, I was amazed to see the quality of the pictures. I now realize that I was the first Kashmiri and Indian to travel to Sharada from this side of divide in 60 years. My dream, wherein I was 'told, that the whole orchard is yours came true and I did go in to that orchard which has almond trees and each branch has for blossom, the diamond, emeralds, sapphires and gems, the precious stones of knowledge, wisdom, scholarship and the like.

(Reproduced form the book 'The Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits'. Courtesy; Himalayan Research Foundation.)

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Theology

Monism, Monotheism and Polytheism

Rabinder Kumar Koul

Objective:
Our world has many varied views of the ultimate reality/existent, some based on the Dharma traditions of India, some based on the scientific tradition of the modern world and yet some others on the religious world view of the Semitic traditions. When we talk about reality and ultimate existent, one looks at the modern science for guidance and we ignore the truth claims made by Semitic religions (as these are fundamentally contrary in their approach and attitude to the scientific view). On the other hand when we talk of religious world view, people lump Dharma traditions also in to that. The dominant narration currently classifies the truth claim by religions and Dharma traditions in terms of internal scheme provided by Semitic religions. This classification is based on monotheistic and polytheistic categories that are internal to the Semitic religions. The thrust of this note is to show that this classification is incomplete and narrow and can not capture wholly the different versions of reality that includes scientific, Dharma-based and religion-based view points simultaneously. An alternative classification is presented, that is internal to the Dharma tradition, and it is shown to capture not only the scientific and Dharma view, but also the Semitic religious view of reality in its classification scheme.

> **The dominant narration currently classifies the truth claim by religions and Dharma traditions in terms of internal scheme provided by Semitic religions. This classification is based on monotheistic and polytheistic categories that are internal to the Semitic religions.**

Begin Digression:
Here I am distinguishing Dharma from religion, even though outsiders have translated Dharma as religion for us. The reason for this separation is the dilemmas this translation creates, when we apply this translation in situations, where Dharma as a conceptual category can be easily applied, the religion as a category cannot be applied. Take for example the commonly understood distinct domains.

- Living
- Humans
- Animals
- Plants and vegetables
- Non-Living
- Conceptual

In all the above cases the notion of Dharma is applicable. For example my wife is called my "*dharma-patni*", but I have no religious wife. My *dharma* changes as to what aspect is under consideration. Similarly an animal has his Dharma, but not religion. As do vegetables have *dharma*, but no religion. The non-livings too have their *dharma*, but no religion. In fact the Dharma itself has *dharma*, but religion has no religion. These dilemmas can be sorted out only when the Dharma is understood in all its varieties, and must not be translated as religion.

In this note I use instrumental cause in the sense, say, of a potter making a wheel. He becomes the instrumental cause here and the material cause for the wheel is the mud that is used to make the pot. Even though potter is the instrumental cause, he is not the efficient cause. That cause will be assigned to his consciousness (Atman). However, sometimes the instrumental cause may coincide with the efficient cause. Since these may coincide in the same agent, namely 'God' in Semitic traditions.

End Digression

Introduction:

Very often limitations of our language bind us and cannot let us see beyond these limitations. The **Judeo-Christian-Islamic** traditions are bound by these inner constructs. They can only classify the world's spiritual traditions in to ***monotheistic*** and ***polytheistic*** traditions. These are the blinders put on them by the nature of their discourse. This classification is not broad enough to encompass the non-Judeo-Christian-Islamic worldviews and traditions. This classification based on monotheism and polytheism is internal compulsion of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, because they posit two separate classes of realities. First one of these two realities is called **God**, and the other realities are every thing else "that exists", and is by its very nature different from God. In general, God creates these other no-where and can vanquish these in to non-existence. Technically the God is the instrumental cause and not the material cause. There is no connection between the nature of God and the nature of the **other realities**. Thus, Judeo-Christian reality is of many kinds. There is **God**, then there are **angles**, then there are **men**, **women,** then **beasts** and then **inanimate** things. All of these are distinct from each other and are fundamentally different existents, in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic worldviews. Such a model of the reality is called the **polyistic model** of the reality. God is just one category of reality in their worldview (even though highest) but in existence are many different kinds of realities, completely dis-jointed from each other in a fundamental way. In other words, the Judeo-Christian-Islamic view of the reality is a collection of distinct and materially un-connected realities, which are fundamentally different in character from each other. Looking from this perspective, their "reality view" is **polyistic** worldview. The highest of these categories, namely God, has no material commonality with the rest of the existents. The humans among the rest who are endowed with a soul (another existent) has no commonality with God either. Hence even in principle Christian/Islamic traditions have no possibility of knowing or experiencing God directly, except through the word of an individual, who is classified as prophet. Implicatively this category of "God" is relegated to the mere belief. And this belief has to be maintained in the face of all the other evidence, logical, material or experiential that may arise in due course. That is the irrational is relegated to a deserving and desirable status. Thus these traditions, because of the very nature of their worldview, have no possibility of substantiating their first category of reality called **God/Allah** etc. while living. Therefore, the system is not only **polyistic** but also irrationally identified as faith. **Hence the notion of self-realization in Dharma tradition is entirely different from the nature of salvation. As salvation in Semitic traditions can come only after death, if at all, by either going to heaven (yet another category) or hell.**

> **On the other hand, the scientific worldview as propounded by the modern physics is non-dualistic worldview. ...it claims that there exists one fundamental reality (principle) from which both the space-time and matter along with their dynamics arises.**

On the other hand, the **scientific worldview** as propounded by the modern physics is **non-dualistic worldview**. Based on the experimental observations and the internal consistency arguments, it claims that there exists one fundamental reality (principle) from which both the space-time and matter along with their dynamics arises. This eventual reality (principal), call it Grand-Unified-Quantum-Gravitational reality, is what is hinted at by the modern physics. Even though this ultimate description is not with us currently, but we have a large portion of it already at hand. The success of the modern physics is testimony to that. Thus modern physics emphasizes that the ultimate reality is one from which all else comes forth and that all else is fundamentally tied to this underlying existent through dynamics with some symmetry breaking/phase transition processes. The diversity of the states of mater and the geometry of the space-time arises out of this principle by some symmetry breaking principles and "observational principle", inherently contained in the theory. This scientific view of reality is **non-dualistic** fundamentally at variance from the Judeo-Christian Islamic worldview. Its foundations lay in experience, postulation and logical deductions. Fundamentally the worldview postulates that if something exists, then it can be experienced or deduced from that is experincible. Even though a conscious observer plays a fundamental part in the outcomes of experiments of this theory, there is no explicit explanation or incorporation of the main characteristic of this consciousness' as observer, namely its consciousness/awareness aspect in to the theory. However, the non-dualistic worldview rules in physics. This scientific worldview of humans cannot be captured by the monotheistic/polytheistic classification scheme, but can be captured by monistic/polyistic classification scheme.

Let us now consider the Dharma traditions. These traditions are concerned with the nature of "*sat*" i.e. existence. You can ask this question of the nature of "*sat*" from three different perspectives.

- You ask this question from the perspective of the externally presented world. If you ask this question from the perspective of the external world, there are two possible perspectives. One could ignore the "particular" external and ask the question in terms of the existent as a whole. Let us call this whole as external universe. So this question can be asked about this external whole. On the other hand we could ask this question from the point of view of the "particular" aspect of the external whole. Let us say a about "a table", about " tree", or about "a star". But only about that particular.

The consciousness plays a central role in the Advaitic traditions of India... Hence it also incorporates the aspect of Consciousness as observer that modern physics does not address even though it plays a central role as an observer. This part is on-going work in Physics.

- When you ask the question from the perspective of the universal existent as a whole. This leads to well know question and maxim stated by Maharshi Vyaasa in Brahma Sutra ***"athato brahma jignyaasa"*** **(The Sutra 1 of *Brahmasutra Bhaashya*)**. That is intense desire to know Universal manifestation engulfing all particulars and including all particulars. This path of enquiry leads to irreducible existent and is characterized by the notion of "NirguNa-Brahman".
- If instead one asks the question from the perspective of an externally manifested particular. Then one is asking about the properties and the source of this particular. The source that sustains this particular in all its different aspects. The desire and intent to understand the particular in the above sense can be presented as "Athato Dharma Jignyaasa" a statement analogous to the previous statement of Mahaarishi Vyaasa. (My Guru in these matters, Prof BVK Sastry gave this formulation to me, during one of the sessions of studying *Maalini-Vijayottara-Tantra*; main text of Abheda Shaiva tradition). For to understand the nature of any particular existent, is identical to saying,/understanding the Dharma of that existent. That is we should understand the Dharma of the entity under enquiry. As it turns out that process again leads to an irreducible existent that is eternal and source of all the particulars that are presented. The answer to the first question and the second question both lead to the same irreducible "*sat*".
- Suppose one switches from the object (particular or universal) to the subject the individual self. And the person asks the same question from the perspective of his individual self. Here by self is not implied any thing more than the following. Every one has some understanding of say; what he or she is? It could be as simple as; "that my name is X, I am of a given complexion, my height is so sand so, I am of this or that profession etc". What ever you think you are, you start from there, and then enquire are you really that only, or that alone, or are you something else. This enquiry in to the nature of ones self is to enquire in to the nature of Atma/Aham. Now if one replaces "Brahma" in celebrated Vyaasa's statement you end up with "Athato Atma/Aham Jignyaasa". This replacement can be justified on the grounds of "Atma=Brahman" or "*Aham Brahma asmi*". This leads us to "*Athaato Atma/Aham jignyaasa*". That is intense desire to know the Aham or Atman. This study leads to the study of Aagam-Tantra path. This enquiry leads to realizing that ones very self is what we call "Shiva"/"Shiva-Shakti".

(This aspect was also taught to me by My Guru ji Prof BVK Sastry).

- The fascinating part is that this Sat=Atman=Shiva=Brahman. Of course there are other names used by different variations of these main directions of enquiry.

I must also point out that even though my above description is based on Monistic/Monistic-theism based traditions; like Vedanta and Abheda Shaivism of Kashmir, the argument goes through (except the last point), with small alterations as we look at these issues from the *advaitvaada* perspective. All that is needed to maintain the conclusion, is to have identity of the efficient and the material cause. The difference between the non-dual vs. dualistic traditions of such genre (both efficient and material cause issue...) arises in assumption, if the part contains the whole or part is only part of the whole.

Given the above summary, it is obvious that Indian traditions too, cannot be captured by the classification categories of the monotheism and polytheism, since the tradition attempts to capture whole reality like physics tries in Natural Sciences. The Semitic classification ignores the reality (existence) as a whole and is focused only on one existent called God (the efficient cause of the rest but not the material cause). Thus the monotheistic and the polytheistic classification cannot capture the Indian notion of existent/"***Sat***"

Alternate Classification:

Indian traditions also provide an internal classification scheme that is broad enough to capture all the above views of reality, be it Judeo-Christian-Islamic, Indian, or modern scientific traditions. This reality classification scheme is given as:

- Non-Dualistic Reality: It has three possibilities as given below.
- No-Reality (nihilistic view)
- Non-dualistic (monistic) View (There is only one rteality and every thing else arises from it)
- Non-dual Monistic theism (as in Abheda Shaiva tradiion or Abheda Shaakta traditions as in Saundariya Lahri)
- Dualistic Re ality: There are at least two distinct realities
- Polyistic Reality: There are many distinct realities materially fundamentally distinct from each other

Indian Vedic, Agamic/Ta.ntric, Buddhist, Jaina and Sikh traditions are all fall into one of these as shown below.

Non-Dual Tradition	
No- Existent	Buddhism
Only One Existent that appears as many	Advaitic Traditions / Modern Scientific view
Dualistic Traditions	Nyaya/Yoga/Vaishishka /A/Dvaita Shaiva/ Vaishnava Traditions/ Sikhism
Polyistic Tradition	Polyistic TraditionJudeo-Christian-Islam

Even though Advaitic traditions posit only one kind of reality, there is more than one variety of Advaita. The difference is in the details. The consciousness plays a central role in the Advaitic traditions of India and every thing else eventually is shown either to be evolutes from it or only an appearance. Hence it also incorporates the aspect of Consciousness as observer that modern physics does not address even though it plays a central role as an observer. This part is on-going work in Physics. In Advaitic traditions too, in my perspective a modern understanding of the evolutes of the TatvAs have to be better understood. That is a different story.

It can be seen that this classification provides complete classification scheme for the Scientific, Dharma and Semitic religious world view. But in principle is a complete in the sense that any new worldview will take its place within this scheme, so long we can enumerate its categories.

Debate

On Ethnicity

Shantiveer Kaul

I recently came across the article "The Identity of the Kashmir People" written by late Akhtar Mohiuddin. The article had appeared earlier, before the death of Akhtar in 2001, and was now being reprinted by a Kashmir centric magazine. I had heard about the article earlier but had never actually read it myself. The belated reading did not really surprise me. It only left me dismayed.

One fact is emphatically established after reading this article – whatever else Akhtar Mohiuddin maybe, he certainly is no student (leave alone being a scholar) of history. He has written short stories that sometimes evoke the oeuvre they are set in. Let me try to situate him in his time space continuum in a like manner. This would be my critique: "One of the pet pastimes of the Kashmiri dilettante is to make deep or controversial statements. In his quest for subjects to make profound statements on, he usually falls back on the all-time favourite – history and, by extension, archaeology. He naively believes that these subjects are pseudo-disciplines and he can get away with any fanciful statement with little fear of rebuttal since he can always claim that it is only his opinion that need not conform to the generally accepted academic view. He now begins to *believe* in his own little stratagem, thinks that he has acquired the patina of scholarship and soon assumes the air of infallibility trying to peddle nescience as profundity. Very soon, sundry agendas begin to get served, helped in no small measure by interested cabals and powerful lobbies. He now struts around with even more fanciful and outlandish notions."

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While Akhtar's article is palpably replete with outlandish claims and illiterate formulations, it is not for me to dismantle his castle of wishful cards, since I am neither a historian nor a qualified archaeologist. I would rather like to draw the attention of the reader to a slew of questions that the article unwittingly throws up. What constitutes Ethnicity? Is it merely an anthropological attribute or the proximate identity of a given group of people? What is the character of Ethnicity and which are its transactional underpinnings?

In a book published in 1988, Rajni Kothari observed, "At the present juncture of world history, ethnicity takes on both centralizing and decentralizing, dominating and liberating forms. Its more humane version respects plurality and 'includes' other identities. Its more angry and defiant version is monotheistic and 'excludes' others." (Rethinking Development, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1988; p. 191)

This was 1988! Kashmir was not even simmering and 9/11was 'a million miles' away, yet the sentence could have been written today. Has the search for ethnic identity undermined the civilizational 'unity' that was arrived at after millennia of human evolution? What is this identity? We can, at a pinch, exclude about half a dozen things that it is, singly, not – in an extension of the *neti, neti* paradigm. Identity is not cuisine, attire, ritual, geographical locus, historical context or religion alone. Yet, is it devoid of any or all of these? Perhaps not, but all of these markers seem like *post facto* attributes or attenuated, acculturated or evolved states. Surely identity, which we are here employing in the sense of Ethnicity, begins before all of this. In an *a priori* something!

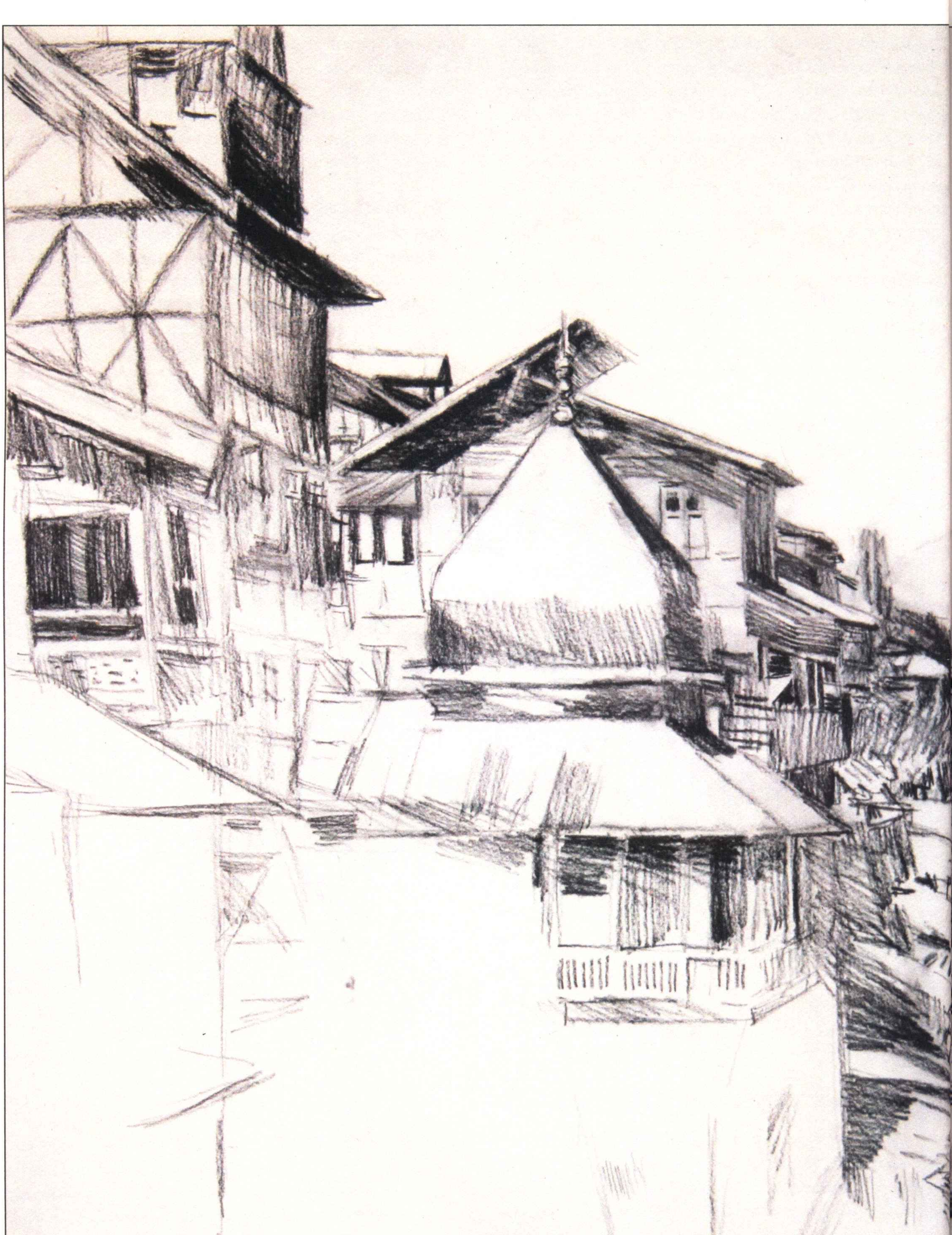
That something could begin with the genetic makeup. I, as a Kashmiri, belong to a certain distinct Haplo group, likely to be one among only three – H, L or R2. I may or may not share it with say, the Chenchu or Koya tribe of South India, but I definitely share it with a non-Gujjar, non-Pahari Kashmiri Muslim of the valley of Indian Kashmir (not one from Pak Occupied Kashmir, whose generalized genotype is different). So, do I have the same Ethnicity or ethnic identity as Yasin Malik? The very thought makes me shudder, but I am fairly comfortable with the possibility of having the same Ethnicity as Ghulam Mohammed Bawan. This is the first quandary.

I am quite aware that there are marked cultural differences between me and an average Kashmiri Muslim, but I can safely put it down to differing socio-cultural mutations over the half millennium gone by when we diverged because of religion.

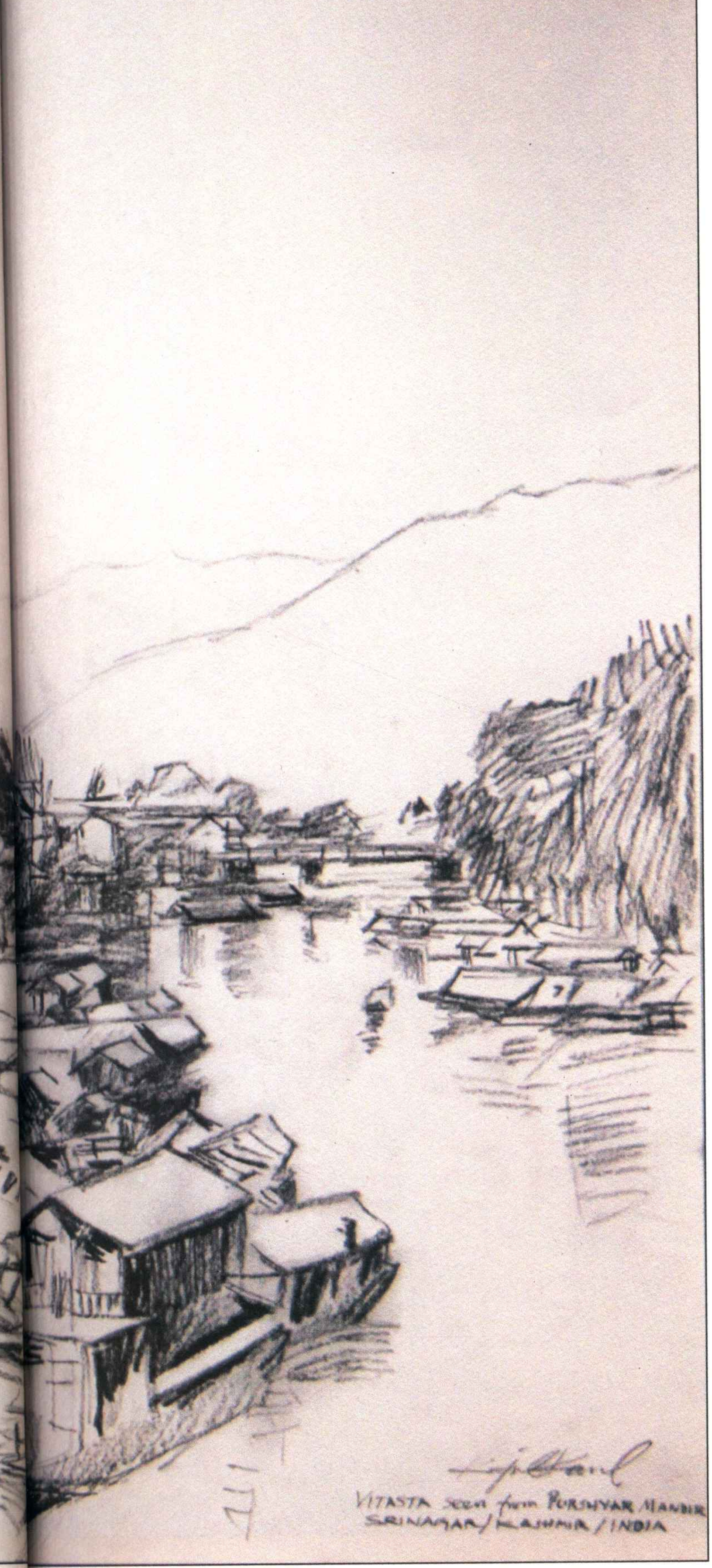
Iam quite aware that there are marked cultural differences between me and an average Kashmiri Muslim, but I can safely put it down to differing socio-cultural mutations over the half millennium gone by when we diverged because of religion. As a matter of fact the differences have come to the fore in the last two decades when the Kashmiri Muslim shed the cloak of his unique identity among world Muslims and allowed himself to be subsumed by a pan-Islamic identity. I have perhaps more socio-cultural differences with my co-religionist from mainland India with whom I share a considerable mythopoeia but also differ on religious nuances. I am different even from a fellow Shaiva or Shakta follower from within my religion who is geographically distant from me even while having several cognate affinities with me. And this difference is not merely due to different geographies, I differ from him in ritual as well as fundamental praxis of religion. There are broad streaks of animism in my faith that give it a unique dimension. Also, my Shaiva Darshana is just that, mine! This is the second quandary.

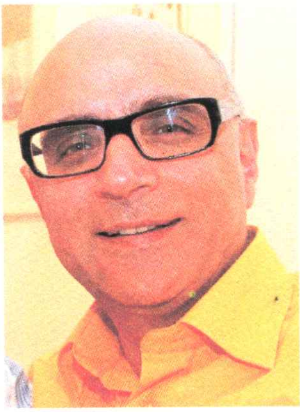
My historicity is the other important dimension. I am a historical being, the outcome of a historical process, of social memory and adaptation. I am the distillate of several centuries of social being – having travelled through the triple filters of economics, politics and environmental security placed in the funnel of time. This historicity of mine has been broken several times, the latest break being the most jarring. Today, as part of the scattered diaspora, my Ethnicity needs a modulated, calibrated definition. My entire existential response and all its dimensions are dependant on that. Added to this is the fact that the a-historic international movement known as the "project of modernity" is also threatening pluralities, since it tends to homogenize. Interestingly, the movement towards a transnational Islamic Brotherhood, although diametrically opposite, intellectually and ideologically, to the "project of modernity" is also a movement towards homogenization/denial of plurality. This is the third quandary. And perhaps the beginning of some unravelling.

In a work in progress, I have dealt with the question of Ethnicity in greater detail. But the scope of that work is general and the approach academic. I have borrowed the theoretical skeleton from it and tried to look at my own immediate, intimate being. My limited objective in this write up is to posit the subject of Kashmiri Pandit identity within a theoretical framework and hope to generate a debate.



Purushyar, Habbakadal


VITASTA seen from PURSHYAR MANDIR
SRINAGAR/KASHMIR/INDIA



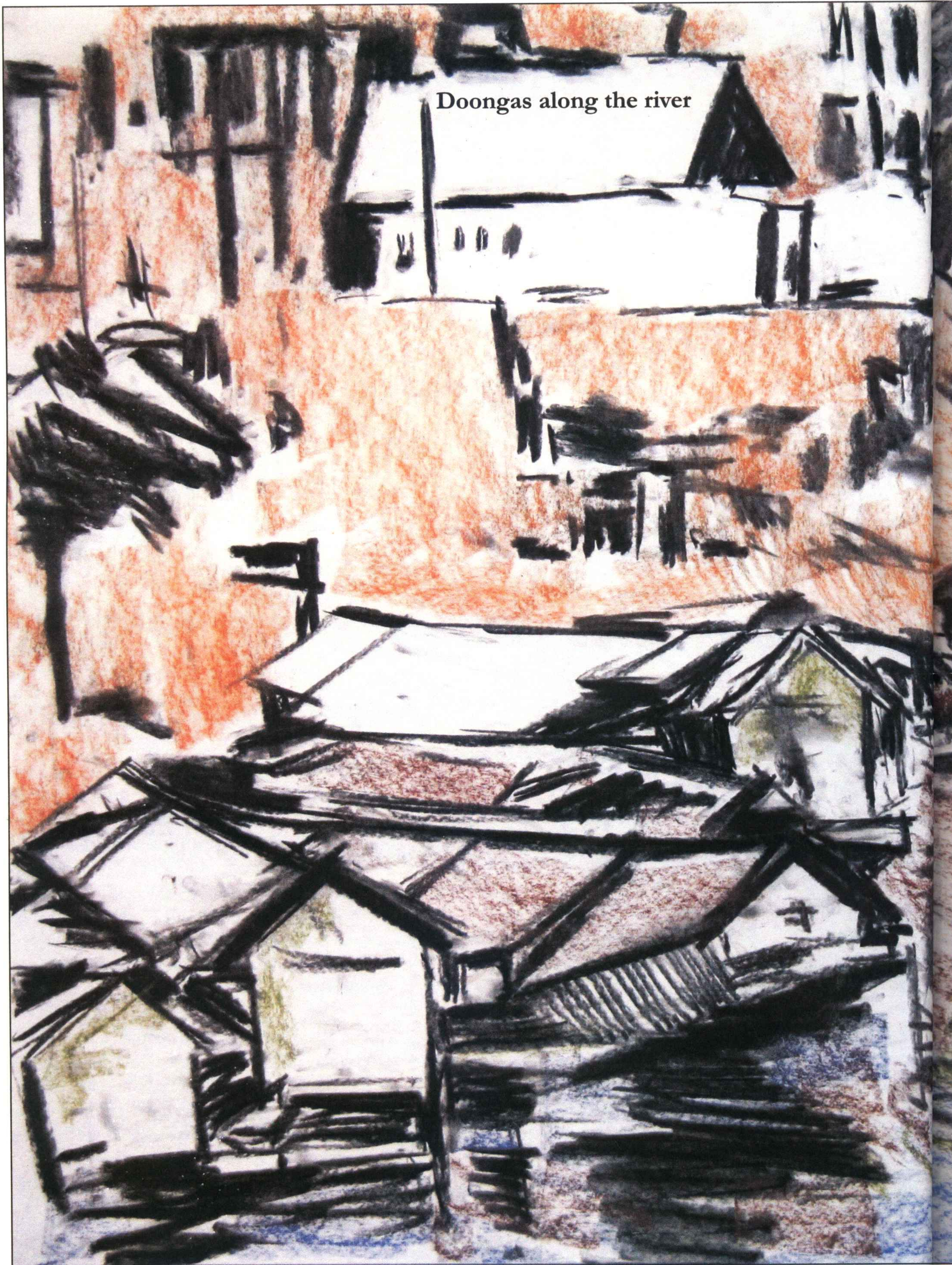
Kapil Kaul

Srinagar: Charcoal drawings of my city

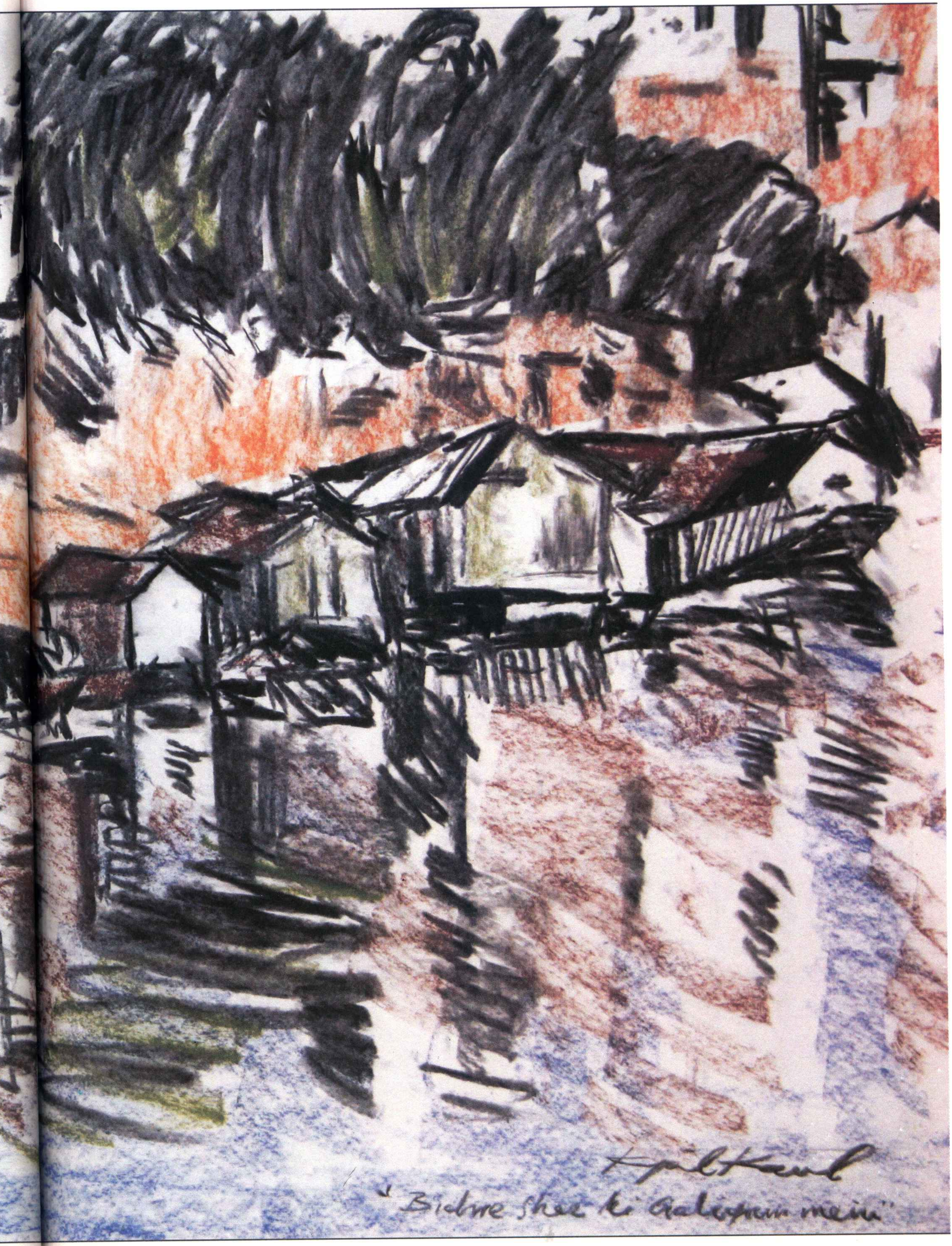
The initial idea behind these drawings is perhaps expressed in these Hindi words: Bichre Shahar ki galiyon mein....

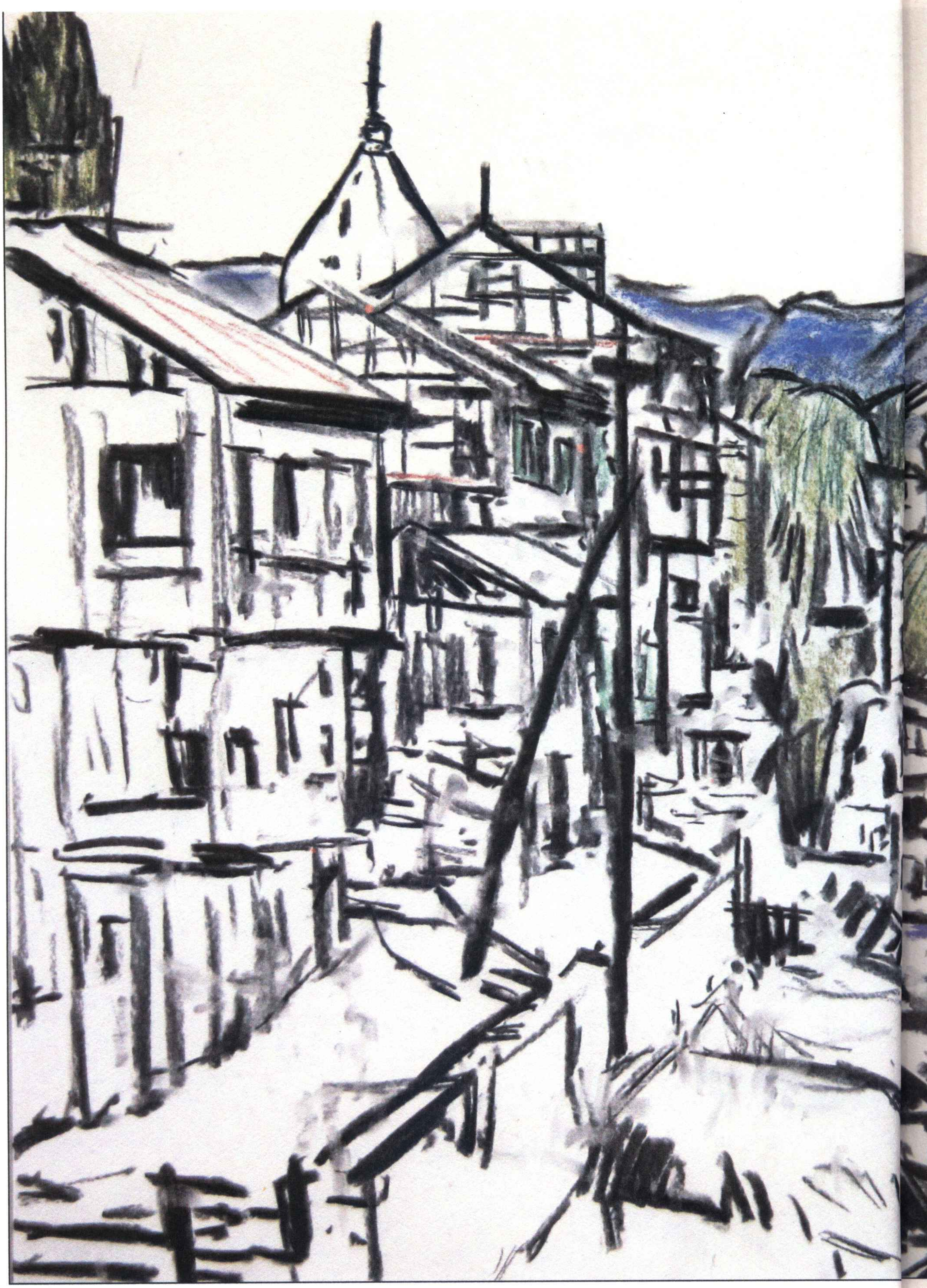
"Charcoal drawings of my city" seemed to be the realistic title to name this series. The association of charcoal as a left over of burnt-out material awake horrific images in ones mind. Utilising charcoal as a creative medium, exploring through lines and shapes the architekture of a place one is very fond of, may awake nostalgic images in ones mind. Drawing means subtraction through abstraction. Not mere reproduction.

Kapil Kaul was born in Srinagar exactly in these architektural surroundings, where he enjoyed his schoolng and college life. For the last thirty years he lives in Europe where he studied art and graphics. He is based in Austria where he lives as an artist and teaches art and graphics in Linz. He had his first one man show in NewDelhi at AIFACS in 1995.

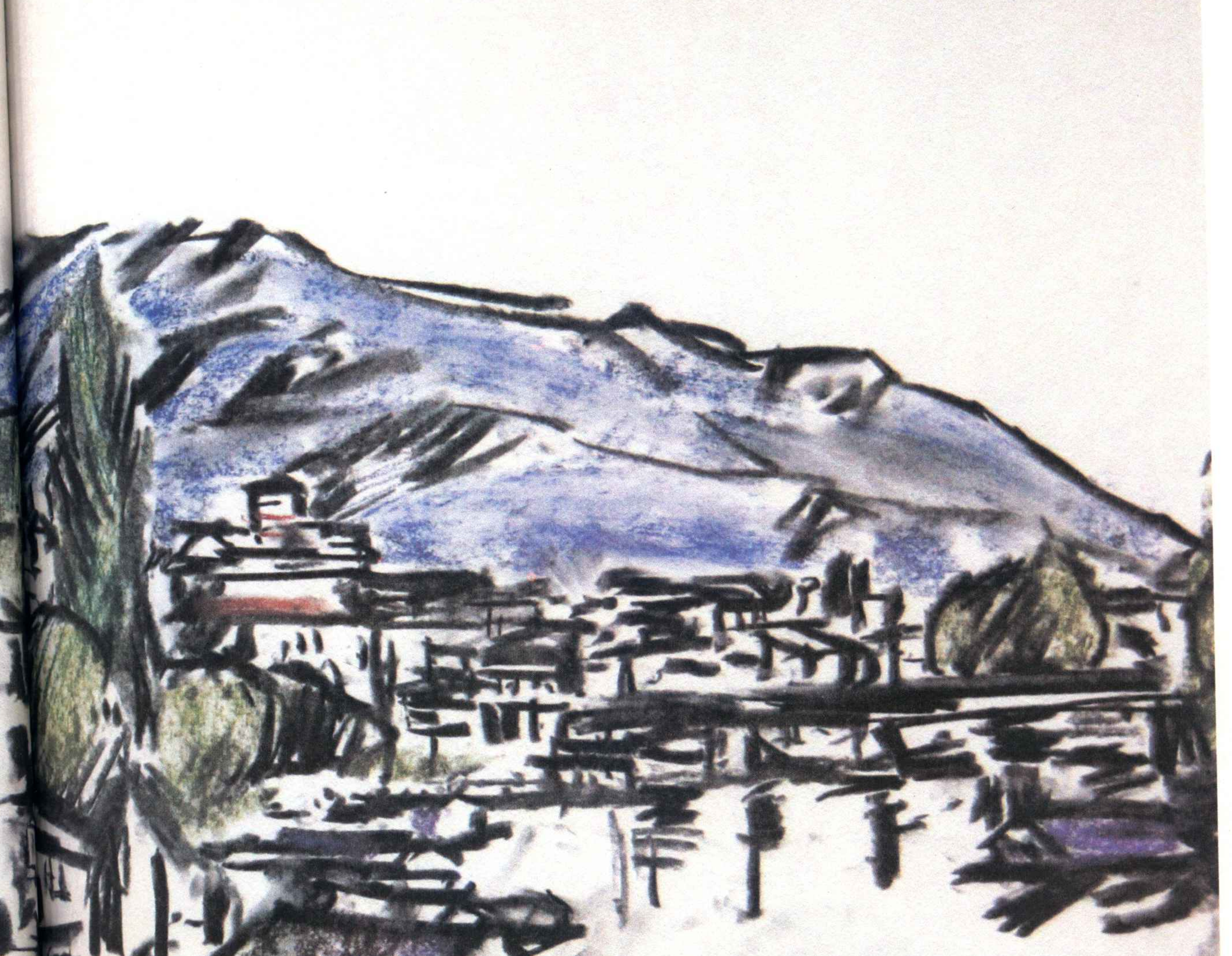


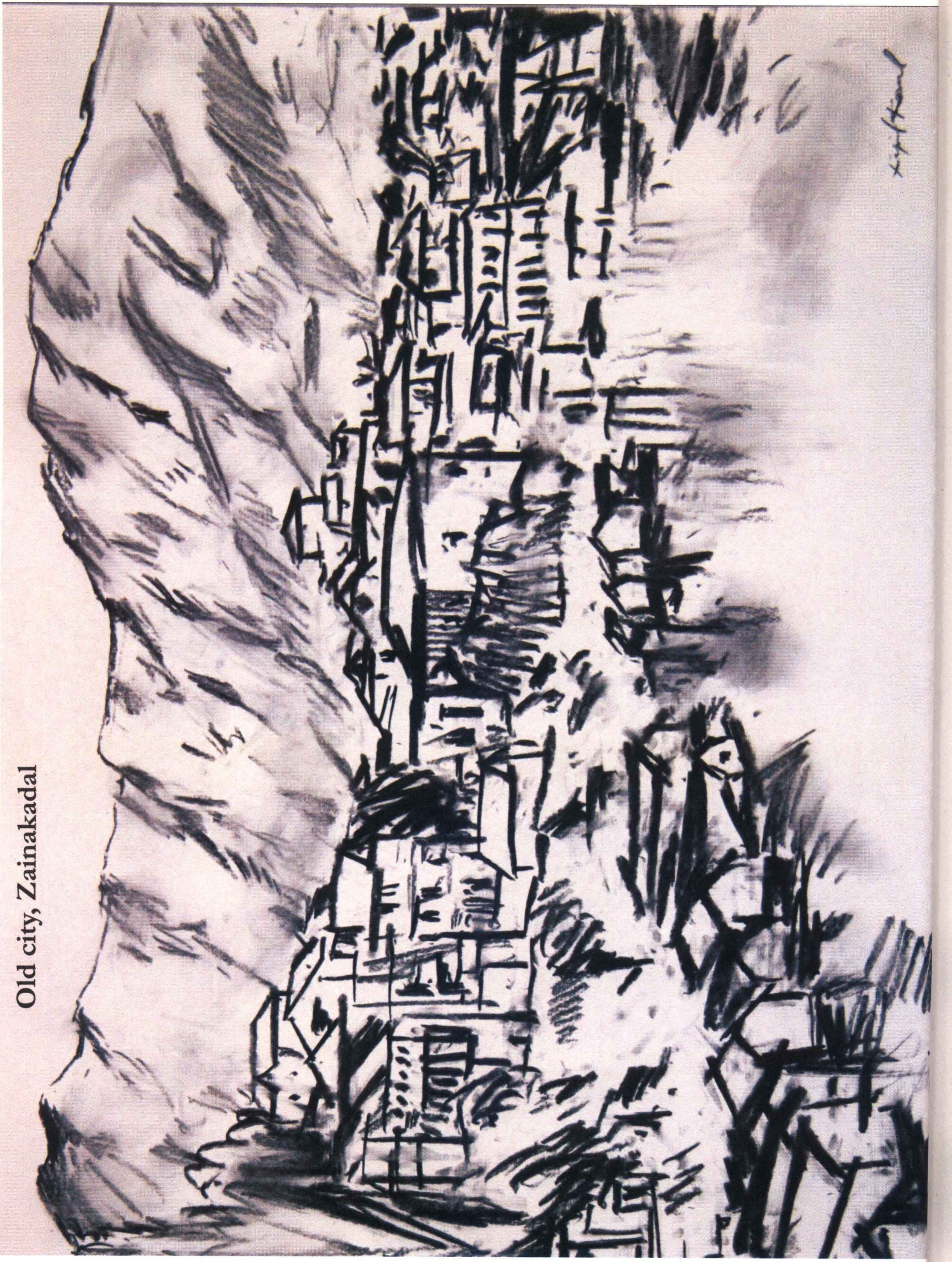
Doongas along the river


Kapil Kaul
'Bichre Shee ki Galiyoun mein'

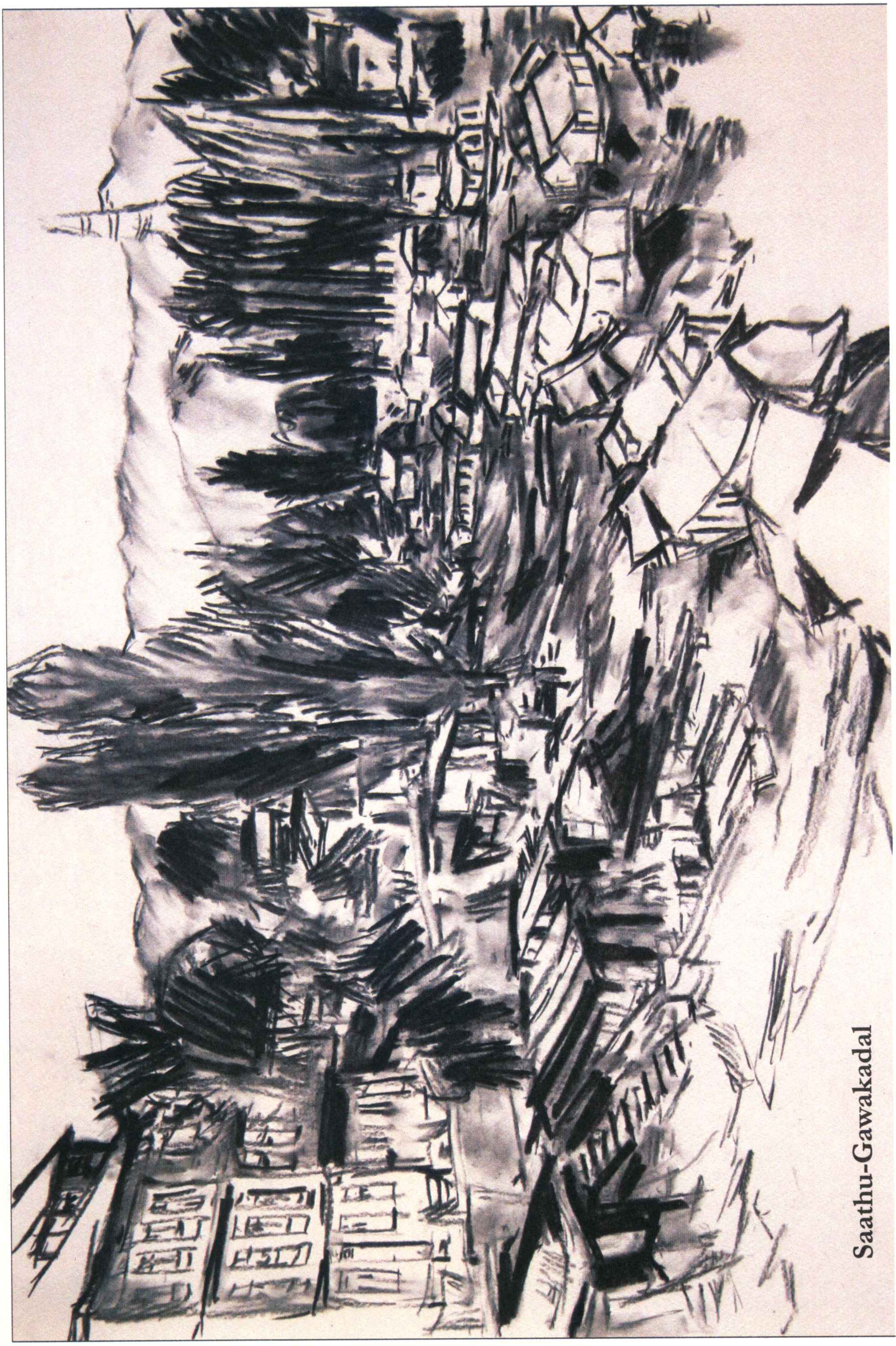


Zainakadal from Alikadal

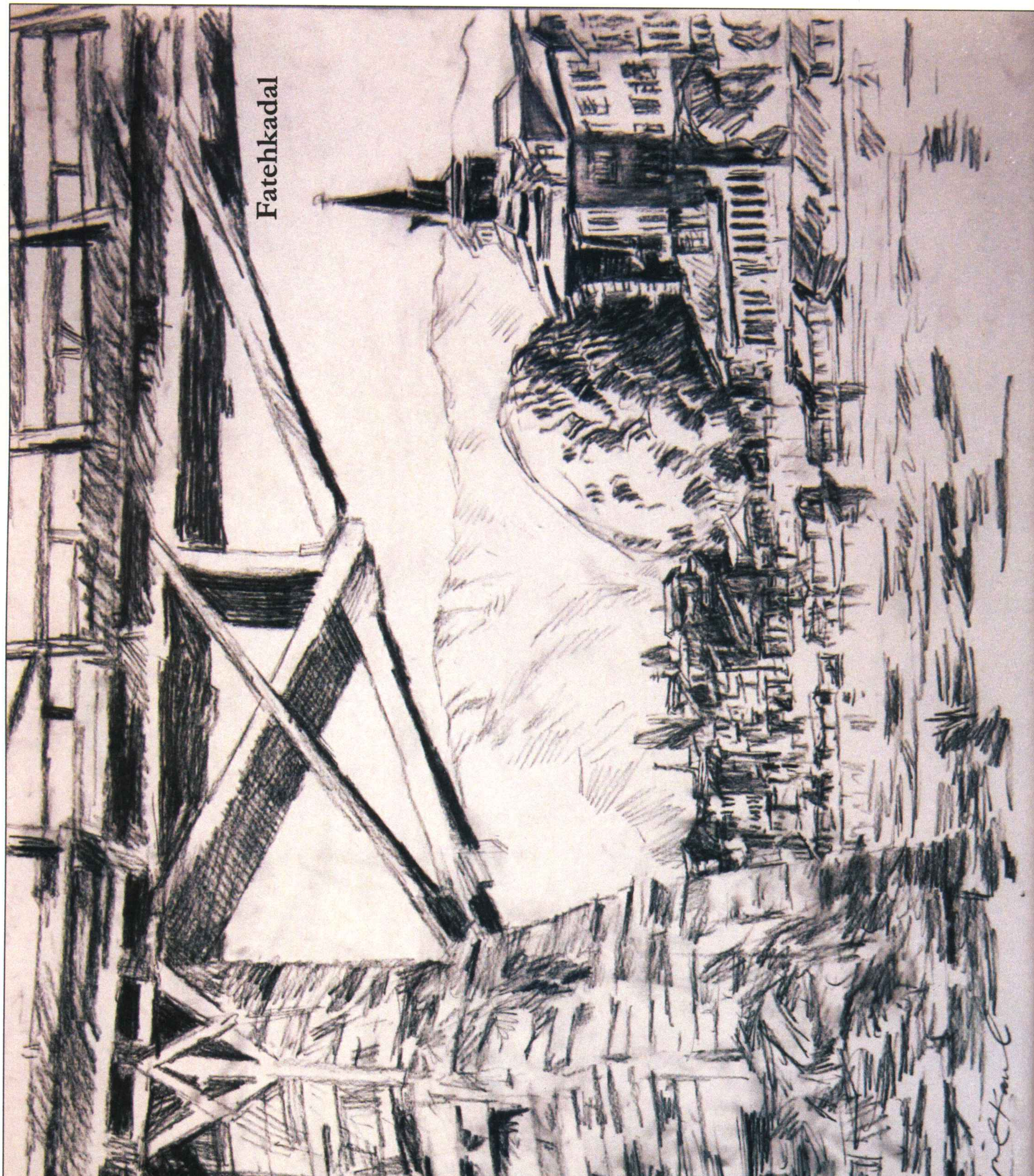




Old city, Zainakadal



Saathu-Gawakadal



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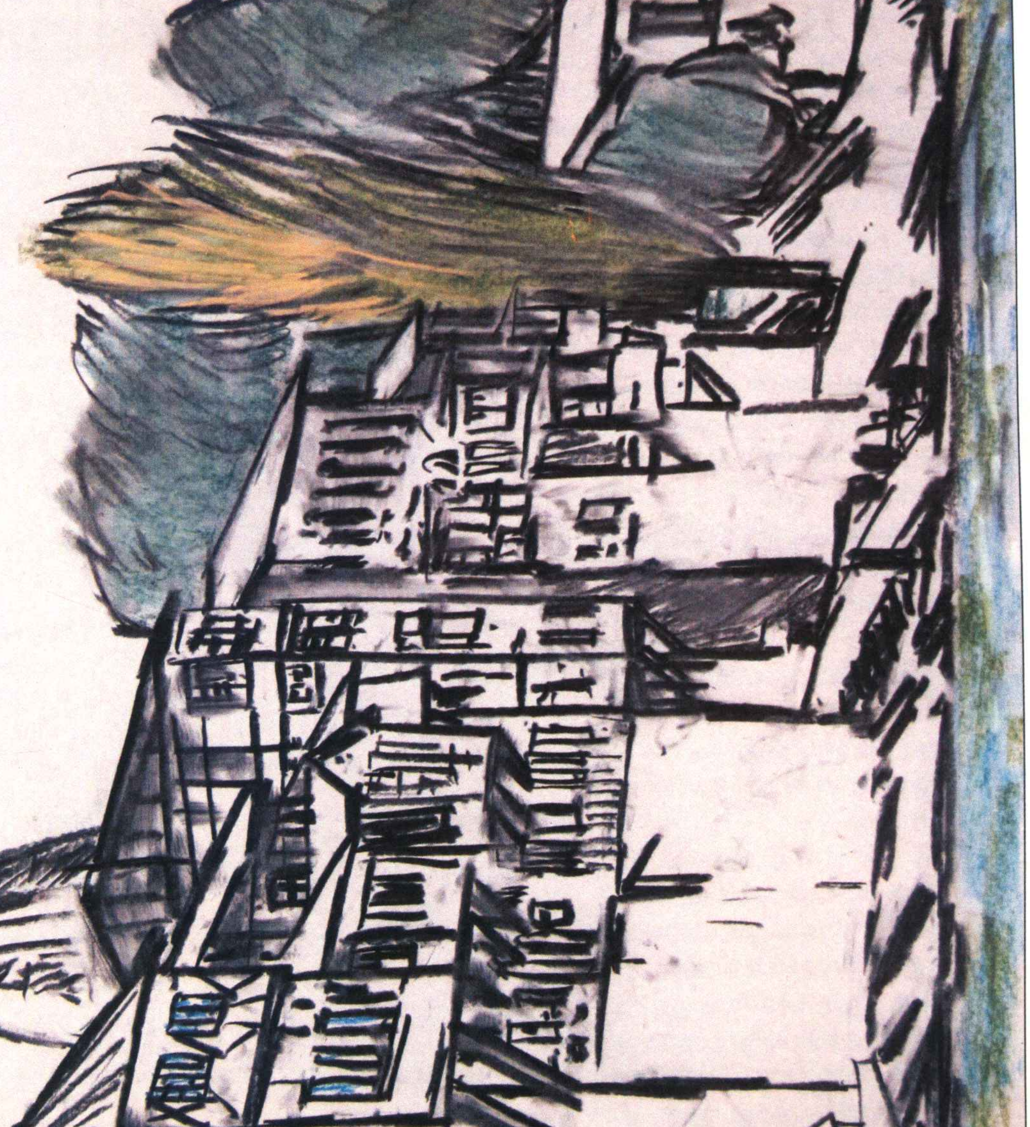

Raghunath Mandir and Ghat

Philosophy

Thoughts on Pratyabhijna Hridayam

Swami Paranand Tirth

Thoughts on Pratyabhijna Hridayam By Swami Paranand Tirth All conventional knowledge is divergently and objectively oriented. Since perpetual divergence comprises the bulk of a work of art or literature, metaphysical treatises, especially those which pertain to word transcendence, are compiled in the form of mystic aphorisms called ***sutras***. Metaphysical treatises especially the eastern ones pertaining to subjective consciousness of ones complete and perfect nature are basically compiled in the form of ingeniously formulated aphorisms which as it were also instigate mystic centers in the cognitive and intuitive core of an aspirant just by being memorized or understood.

Patyabhijna or intuitive reflection is a supra-mental phenomenon since the delusion is about the substratum of the intellect itself. All misreadings and misgivings arising from the misidentification of one's true nature are aberrant and delusive from a metaphysical stand point.

All mystic canons are compiled with the notion of matrices as the ultimate unit of the conveyance of knowledge and they are arranged in order to induce mystic energy along with discursive bulk of spiritual secrets. Therefore, ***Pratyabhijna Hridayam*** is basically a supra-rational canon which aims at transcendence to attain supremacy over patterns of consciousness. This is mediated by the experience of the potency of the great mantra – ***AHAM*** which is also an abbreviation of all alphabets of the Sanskritlanguage.

The author *Kshemaraja* in his commentary on the text gives the reason behind it's compilation as to facilitate the comprehension of aspirants with meager knowledge of logic and hence with delicate intelligence. The method for their redemption is through ***Shaktipat*** or the induction of psychic energy into the aspirants, which generates a subjective experience of the power of consciousness.

Intuitive insight through arcane means always has an edge over the discursive syllogism.Despite his meager intellectual competence a devout aspirant who is fit for receiving the ***Shaktipat*** initiation – can attain ***jeevanmukti*** and perfect command over the configuration of the deities which are only the projections of his own consciousness. . ***Shaktipat*** is a one sided affair where one has to depend solely on benevolence of the ***Guru*** who, as the *tantrik* tradition has it must be conceived as not different from ***Paramashiva*** specially with his power of redemption or ***anugraha***.

Patyabhijna or intuitive reflection is a supra-mental phenomenon since the delusion is about the substratum of the intellect itself. All misreadings and misgivings arising from the misidentification of one's true nature are aberrant and delusive from a metaphysical stand point. Unlike monism ***Shaiva*** doctrine of ***Pratyabhijna*** does not deny the real nature of the phenomena. Even in Vedanta the real nature of ***Ishwar srishti*** is not refuted nor is the power and process of creation considered as virtual from the stand point of – a secondary manifestation of the absolute generally termed as ***dvitiya sachiva*** in the glossary of *Shankarite* monism.

This aberrant world -view lasts till the preceptor disillusions you and you are aware of your pure conscious subjective nature. Now this needs a great heroic feat to submit to the preceptor since he is going from within your cognitive apparatus and leads you from the innate misconception that has produced myriads reciprocations of nescience . This innate misconception is as time transcendent and spatially pervasive as the universal self itself . The preceptor has to pierce through the mire of chaotic doodle of a novice – called ***vikalpa*** in the Shaiva terminology. .Guru along with the revelations, faith and devotion blesses a novice by refining this imagery or *vikalpa* which is defined as "dream" in the Shaivite texts . This dream can also be refined by manipulating REM patterns by seasoning of the disciples REM by giving him the eye contact. This is called ***drigdeeksha*** in the *Tantrik* cannons which is highly efficacious and can redeem a novice within trice. Repeating the scriptures containing the dictum of the ***Agama*** has also been mentioned as one of the means of refining *Vikalapa.*

Shaktipata and intense devotion can deliver an aspirant from the chaos of doodle and vice in the head . The domain of maya pramata cannot be transcended unless the aspirant learns the metaphysical semblance between the jiva Shiva and Parama Shiva...

Shaktipata and intense devotion can deliver an aspirant from the chaos of doodle and vice in the head . The domain of ***maya pramata*** cannot be transcended unless the aspirant learns the metaphysical semblance between the ***jiva Shiva*** and ***Parama Shiva*** which is signified by carrying out the five fold functions determined by procreation attachment, dissolution, illumination and gnosis .

This is the divine synchrony that leads an impure and illusory soul to perfection and completeness. Without this rapport or knowledge of this rapport one is perpetually deluded by the divergent out-flux of the projections of his own consciousness . By knowing the semblance one conserves sufficient spiritual synergy for withdrawal and convergent orientation of the power of consciousness that cleanses the mind [***chittam***] of the conditioning of objective taint and resumes it's essential nature as pure subjective awareness or ***chiti***

For that he must organize and pattern-ize the entire objectivity into various specifications of conceptualizations and authentic ontology which are configured only to facilitate the transcendence .The specialty of the ***Agamas*** is that they do not look up into the holy books and cite verses to assert their authenticity – the Guru knows his ways around with the novices , his word of mouth is the Vedic dictum for the acolytes . Whether the guru teaches his disciple about 118 or 224 or infinite this is the biggest epistemological fallacy of the agamas that it must be learnt from either an authentic preceptor or through the tradition of his uninterrupted lineage

To sum up, the description of the phenomena is not as important in the ***Agamas*** as the method prescribed by the Guru to redeem his disciple after evaluating his competence and potentialities, hence there is no conflict in such canons.

Upaya jalam na Shiva prakashayet

(No effort or procedure can illuminate the self evident Parameshwara)

How can an insentient jar illuminate the sun.It does not take an insentient portion of the objective phenomena to vindicate the existence of sentience consciousness is per se and aposteriori of it's cognitive experience.

One very good Sanskrit analogy is ***dingvyamohadivat*** like losing the sense of direction.A man heading into the wrong direction cannot know himself he must have another entity disillusioning him about the sense of direction. This juncture of cognitive and intuitional gnosis is named as ***pratyabhijna*** **.**

Most popular example among the votaries of absolute monism is witnessing the awareness of deep or dream less sleep.This is an aphoristic encryption of

IshwarPratyabhijna which requires enough logic and sense of grammar to refute the rival doctrines and assert the science of ***pratyabhijna*** or intuitive gnosis of the recognition of **Paramashiva** as the supreme self . Discursive in nature the original text is rather a philosophic exposition than a practical compendium of this school of thought. (Sutras x and xi Pratybhijna Hridayam).

The author in the proprietary verses seems to speak highly of the aphorisms as he calls them the essence of the ocean of ***Pratyabhijna*** especially ***Shankaropanishad*** another name for ***Ishwar Pratyabhijna*** .The commentary however mars the greatness as –meant for aspirants who have not studied the terse subject of logic sufficiently.

Upanishad is an abstract term in Indian metaphysics. All arcane metaphysical canons are the ***upanishads*** and this is more of apersonification than merely a treatise. ***Shankaropanisad*** can be the accumulation of knowledge leading to ones Shiva hood or just the presiding deity of the metaphysical wisdom .This is rather a *Prakriya shastram* and deals only with practical hints about the recognition of the self . Being an ***Agama*** [knowledge attained through the lineage of spiritual realization] epistemological precision is not necessary .*Agamas* areconceptualizations which are authenticated though private lineage of knowledge and stand in no need of testimony of the vindication of revelations . *Agamas* are signified as their unique tradition of gratifying the preceptor by placing the word of mouth of their preceptor above the dictum of the scriptures.

Avesha can be defined as the process of pervasion of the superior spirit to displace the personality of a conditioned being. It is analogues to the process of demagnetization of a small magnet with less magnetic power in the proximity of a strong magnet...

The multifarious versions and interpretations of the *Agamas* are not free from ambiguity .This has rendered all the more necessary for the aspirant to go by the index of a man who has had a direct experience of the supreme self rather than an accumulation of discursive knowledge no matter how much in depth.

Abhinavgupta has interpreted ***samadhatum*** as ***aveshayitum*** *in his commentary on the ***Bhagvad Geeta*** -- . *samadhatum aveshayitum*. *abhyasa* is a deliberate effort to distinguish *abhyasa* exercise and *aavesha* dawning of the subjective awareness –he goes on to say The ***avesha*** cannot be possible without an intense infusion of the divine power that follows a prolonged servitude and docility at the holy Guru's feet and thereby his munificence. .***Avesha*** can be defined as the process of pervasion of the superior spirit to displace the personality of a conditioned being. It is analogues to the process of demagnetization of a small magnet with less magnetic power in the proximity of a strong magnet and then it's magnetization with opposite polarity. The medium is processed with the supreme spirit and his/her superego confined and conditioned. Ego is either terminated or reduced to minimum and gets dormant.

The best among such type of *aveshas* is ***Shambhavesh***. In the Agamas this is called ***Shambhava vedh***. A novice who has liquidated his ego and is perpetually docile before his preceptor is considered most competent for such initiation since this depends solely on the benevolence of the Guru. One cannot question or examine his competence –he may never reveal it. To wish means to enter or pervade this with a prefix a refers to complete or entire. *Avesh* etymologically means to pervade. This is a very subtle process so in this parlance the pervasion is not like a deity possessing a medium as we often see in the inner reaches of the Himalayas but is a total metamorphosis of the ***jiva Shiva*** or individual experience into ***Parama Shiva*** or the absolute self, instantaneously and concomitantly!

*Ceeta gloss xii verse viii and ix

Parashiva samavesh or dawning of the superego - can happen only when firstly the aspirant is totally dedicated secondly the preceptor is capable of inducing his experience of completion into the disciple and thirdly when there is a thorough knowledge of the discursive part of the phenomena. Now this is a rare combination –

Prasad pad mashvasta dwi trih santi na panchasha
(Those who are content with prasad or the power of consciousness which accounts for the subjective awareness of one's Shivahood are either two or three in number and never five or in another words – only to be counted on the finger tips.)

Shambhavavesh is a unique type of initiation in which the novice transcends all bodily and mental activities as means to attainment of his Shiva hood .Since Shivahood is innate and not a produce of any *upaya* this is the most difficult end to accomplish. There is a natural tendency and understanding about the sequence of action and their fructification among human beings. It is difficult to convince any one about the transcendental or supra-mundane phenomena. There is an interesting debate in the ***Ishwarapratyabhijna*** about refuting the refutation of any such entity called ataman among the nihilists .Utpala deva gives the counterargument in support of a witnessing consciousness of the state of deep or dream less sleep. Like wise in the ***Gaudpada karika*** Acharya *Gaudapada* and his successor *Shankaracharya* also tries to establish this fact through reasoning. Is this to be learnt only though the viva voce tradition of preceptors or can it be vindicated even rationally –*Acharya Shankara* through argument and counterarguments establishes the existence of ***vritti*** or the ultimate unconditioned awareness of subjectivity which at the termination of deep sleep manifests as a cognitive function of the type 'I slept happily and knew nothing'.

> **The notion of independence in the parlance of the power of consciousness *chiti* or the ultimate subjectivity must be a singular entity . The concept of mutual subjective and objective awareness is metaphysically inconsistent .**

This however is from the standpoint of pre-conceptualized ***atman,*** which is well beyond the reach of all cognition and must be learnt only through faith and devotion in the word of the preceptor. Here the Buddhist argument falls in with the concept of modern neuroscience. There is a nerve in the thalamus and it is truncated during waking state and is facilitated during deep sleep. All awareness is centered in this small nerve and as the sleep is over it pervades intellect and all other neuro physiological systems.

Why conceptualize any such thing as ***atma***? it is futile like the tit in a goat's throat [*it cannot be milked*]. This is alright from an objective stand point. Just cognitive faculty can explain everything like a computer going into hibernating mode and then restarting automatically ,but from a subjective stand point the first experience after the cognitive faculties which have been dormant during dream less or deep sleep have resurrected- occurs in two steps first one being **I slept happily,** this vindicates the presence of a transcendental awareness which is self luminous and needs no conventional cognitive system for its raison de 'etre.. The second part of the intuitive experience **'I knew nothing'** is the experience of secondary awareness when the awareness gets to be conditioned in the cognitive apparatus and the subjective awareness becomes finite.

The definition of waking, sleep dream etc. in ***Shaiva*** doctrine is from a purely pragmatic perspective – knowledge is waking, imagery or wavering of the mind is dream, becomes finite. ignorance of elementary constituents of the phenomena like ***kaala*** etc.is sleep . These are to be evaluated from the standpoint of *Agama* or esoteric conceptualization and thus are exempt from epistemological scrutiny.

Samavesh can also be understood as merger but this is only relevant in the case of what is called as *mayik* or illusory *pramata* .So ***samavesha*** is discarding the finite ego and substituting it by ***parahanata*** or ***purnahanta*** . This is rare and unlike other school of Tantra requires a prerequisite of ***Shiva bhakti*** . ***karma yoga*** according to other *Agamas* is details of shivas worship adoration and pooja ,*Shiv mantra japa* and focusing the mind on *Shiva* put together can comprise bhakti or devotion .This is merely a prelude to the ultimate ***Shambhava upaya*** in which the aspirant does not depend on grosser means for the assertion of his per se Shivahood .

Utpaladev in his hymn to ***Shiva*** says, **“I make obeisance to the blessed devotee who without meditation or repetition of Shiva's name or any other effort is possessed spontaneously by his universal Shivahood.”**
Sentience is the sole agency that accounts for the power and process of creation etc. This is the final word in the context of mind and matter relation ship. Perhaps that is why the entire aphoristic compilation came to be known as ***pratyabhijna*** or intuitive insight. The realm of rationalism ends and idealism begins from this point of intuitive insight into ones own subjective awareness. A divergent and objective approach in which experience is preceded by knowledge or existence predates essence, is merely a compilation of reciprocating trail of interdependent knowledge and experience. This has mislead human kind into a plight in which as Tagore puts it –“the trail of reason gets lost in the dreary desert sand of dry habbit”.

Idealism, on the other hand, leads one to the twilight zone from where one can have an insight into one's transcendental nature The.first step in this right direction is to assert sentience and deny matter and material phenomena .Mind over matter and not mind as an arbitrary produce of inarticulated random hotchpotch of experiences and a hapless pawn at the hands of brute insentient and thus unpredictable and incalculable designs of matter!

Since without being what you are who will attain and what ? So by the munificence of the chitih ones recognition of his own self evident Shivahood takes place. This Shivahood is the biggest of all attainments and hence it is *mahaphalatwam*.

There is another interpretation of this aphorism – ***vishwa siddhi*** pertains to the completion or accomplishment of all endeavors . By the term ***vishva*** [all] mainly five functions are understood and not just creation . It can also be construed to mean that only sentient subjective consciousness or mind is the testimony of evidence of the existence of insentient matter and not vice versa .We shall go into the details of subjective objective and mixed awareness while elaborating on the third aphorism.

There is no other means of causation fundamental or instrumental or other wise required to assist the power and process of creation etc. The ultimate agency of the universal phenomena accounts for the creation etc. Independently this is an arcane theory of creation called ***sphurattavaada*** or the doctrine of modification of consciousness . This blends with all theories which propound that the initial mode of creation is ideal or mental and then it gets grosser as the diverge process of evolution of matter and energy proceeds. . A dynamic oscillation of consciousness within it's own domain decrees the spontaneous as well as successive evolution of the universal phenomena comprising thirty six elements or elementary constituents of the universal phenomena, five classes or *Kalas* and 224 *bhuvanas* or various categorizations the spectrum of spiritual evolution ranging from, the annihilator realm of *Kalagnirudra* up till the most austere eternal substratum of *Anuttara Shiva*. The notion of independence in the parlance of the power of consciousness ***chiti*** or the ultimate subjectivity must be a singular entity . The concept of mutual subjective and objective awareness is metaphysically inconsistent.

Concomitant subjectivity and objectivity of two entities is aberrant even from a modern scientific standpoint – one correction has to be made in the case of bodies observing and being observed by one another at the same time while moving towards one another or away from one another or moving in the same direction at the speed of light . Supposing they moved at the speed of thought the error will be more . One must conceive of a third and fourth person who is the substratum of the conditioned subjective awareness of – I you and him. He has been called as ***purushottama*** or the best among the *purusas* and is the self of all three persons viz I you and him.

Only the fourth purusha can be the real untainted subjective awareness. Others are always conditioned in time space substance and mind .So the problem of plurality of ***chiti*** or ***chittashakti*** is refuted at the very out set . There is an episode in ***Chandi Charitram*** where the demon *Nishumbha* [symbol of faulty and fallacious gnosis] challenges goddess *Mahasarswati* [goddess of righteous cognition] and states:

Anyasam balam asritya yudhyase yati manini
(O vane woman you are seeking the help of so many warrior women and feeling proud)

The goddess replies –
Ekevaham jagatyatra dvitiya ka mama para Pashyanto dusta mayyev vishantyo mad vibhutayah *(I am one without a second in this universe who else exists except me O vicious one behold as my own projections dissolve into me)*

One learned scholar from Kashi once told me the Tantrik encryption in this canto ***aikev*** has the *vak beejam* and *kam* and *para* signifies the *kam* and *Shakti beejas* respectively . The primordial power of consciousness is one without a second .She manifests in three forms namely the powers of knowledge, will and action .These further multiply to fill this universe with *Shaktis* of myriad description . This is not plurality or duality but the spontaneous reciprocation of the projections of one singular *Magna Mater.* All concepts of duality as plurality in her are the fallacious perspectives of demoniac nescience like that of *Nishumbha* [who wanted to besiege the kingdom of heaven as if through violence] .Only meritorious beings like *Indra* can be the king of the heaven .

There used be a school of ***brahmavadins*** or to be more precise ***shant brahmavadins*** perhaps propounded by ***Bhartri Prapanch*** or ***Audulomi.*** They maintained that *Shakti* belongs to *Brahman* and thus depends on him as her substratum for the power and process of creation etc. *Brahman* conceptualizes his *Shakti* in some negligible portion of his infinite domain, causes her to trifurcate according to the three attributes viz *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* and then he unites with theses three to carry out the process of creation maintenance and dissolution.

Chittashakti is independent and requires no other agency for such process .Moreover the phenomena is her ***sphuratta*** – auto oscillatory phenomena and needs no external agency . This also refutes the theory of modification or ***parinamavada*** –*Prakriti parinamavada* as well as *Brahma parinamavada [* mentioned by *Kshemendra but now extinct]* By the term ***vishwa*** completion , primordial causation, effortless attainment and a great accomplishment are understood . There is a method of elimination in Indian logic in which one cuts down on living the question – all possible interjections are already listed and explained as ***vishwa.***

Siddhi can be interpreted in several ways . the meaning of the word *vishwam* as entire ,as specified and defined in the Tantrik canons is the conventional meaning of the word *vishvam* . It also refers to complete or taken in juncture with *siddhi* – all accomplishments like *dharma* , *kama, artha* and *moksha* but that is not the propound of the aphorism so it must refer to only entire universal phenomena and not everything one can think of . Since the mode of creation in this doctrine is by ***sphuratta*** and not modification only the a priori universe manifests into grosser forms . The ideal and conceptual phenomena materializes and the process of this materialization is called ***unmeelanam*** . There fore *Vishwam* has also been defined as primordial causation or *karanam.*

The self is subjective and per se not to be cultivated through any penance or other forms of effort. ***Sukhopayata*** refers to the means of effortlessness just as a man already having gold does not have to turn brass into gold –only his delusion about it's being brass has to be removed similarly a man does not have to become Shiva through penance or meditation but only his misidentification with non-Shiva portion of the phenomena has to be dispelled . There is maxim almost as old as this canon itself –
Atma labhat paro labhah nastiti kavayoh vidhuh
[Sureswaracharya in Manasollasa]

(There is no attainment as profitable as the attainment of the self)

Since without being what you are who will attain and what? So by the munificence of the **chitih** ones recognition of his own self evident Shivahood takes place. This Shivahood is the biggest of all attainments and hence it is ***mahaphalatwam.***

First person

Threadbare

Sushil Pandit

His name was Pt. Balabhadra Revoo. He was my grandfather, on my mother's side. These days, my memories of him are getting more vivid by the day. He was most unlike anyone else I had ever met in all of my eight years, way back in 1971. By the time I was nine he was gone. I remember the day when my mother had to suddenly rush to Srinagar from Delhi. My father stayed back to look after me, and my sister who is younger to me by two years. They did not tell me then. But I did sense something amiss. I wasn't too familiar with the notion of death, though. Those days, at eight, one wasn't supposed to be. All I remember is that my mother, very worried-looking when she left, looked very resigned on her return. I felt a hush-hush understanding between my parents. It seemed as if they had decided to insulate us from what they were going through. Days later, I hesitantly asked her about *Bobuji* and she just put her hand on my head, looking at me with a pitiful anaemic smile. The following summer of 1972 was my first summer in Kashmir without *Bobuji*. It was so different without him.

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In Srinagar, we spent most of our time at the *matamaal*, my mother's maiden home. It was a house three stories tall, a *ler*, on the main street of *Batayaar*, at *Alikadal*. To enter, you had to just push the main door open. It was latched from inside only late at night, after all those expected were already in. The door opened into a small courtyard, *aangun*. Once inside, you would find yourself on huge blocks of paved stone. Thanks to a *hauz* (bathing space) and a water tap close by, the steps were invariably wet. Decades of stepping over had made their surface, though uneven, slippery smooth, forcing the unfamiliar to be slow and cautious. From there, one stepped on similar stones, paved for the steps that led to the threshold of the house. Most houses had their thresholds about three feet higher than the courtyard. One look and you would know that the threshold was a busy place. It was here that the walls were decorated with traditional murals, grooms were received and rituals of *dwar-puza (worshipping the entrance door)* conducted. The look of the outer walls was that of old handmade bricks – weather-beaten and fading – reinforced by logs and wooden frames. Inside, it was all mud and wood. The corridor kind of passage, immediately beyond the threshold was called *wuz* in Kashmiri. Across homes, I found that the *wuz* were invariably poorly lit. And it looked even darker when you entered it from the outside during the day. On either side of the *wuz* you had large rooms, each called a *vot*. *vot* is where the guests were often received. The stairs led to the first floor comprising three to four smaller rooms, each called a *kuth*. A *kuth* was a private room, often a bedroom. Another flight of stairs led to the *kani*. *Kani* also happened to be the largest room in the entire house and often used as a family lounge. It had, generally, no partitioning walls.

We would spend most of our time in the *kani.* Ours had just a two feet high wall, in the middle that demarcated the inner half. This inner *kani* had a wall-to-wall flooring of *gabbas* (an embroidered woollen rug) and *masnand* (traditional spread on the floor) to sit down on, with bolsters against the walls to lean on. Besides, it also had a couple of chairs. Towards the far end was the wooden flooring, which was called *dab* (a cantilevered extension comprising wooden planks resting on massive logs). The end of the *dab* had large window openings comprising very broad, sliding and removable wooden louvres called *wuroosi.* Once they were off, you could see the limits of our *angun* defined by *pachibaran.* It was a wall of flat wooden planks, placed vertically, about seven feet tall, sunk into the ground at the base and held together by two horizontal planks running parallel and nailed into them. You could also see a pomegranate tree in the corner. It was more like a bush, too weak to climb on to and too low to even sit under. And in the summer, which is when we used to be there, it would have bright yellowish orange, lemon-sized fruit that I could do nothing with. The open and distant views from these windows made that part of the *kani* an ideal place to keep busy doing nothing. In comparison, our home in a DDA flat in Delhi, seemed like a claustrophobic cell. That summer was not the only time I wondered why we lived on a veritable ration of only two months in Kashmir.

I, with barely 2-3 years of schooling, would sit there at the threshold, wide-eyed, observing mesmerised, *Bobuji's* ability to say all that lot, without missing anything or mixing up the order... To me, then groaning under the weight of learning by rote, it seemed superhuman.

Kani also had *Bobuji's thokur kuth*, his small prayer room. The door to the *thokur kuth* had a fading calendar pasted on it with the dates torn off. It was, evidently, retained for the picture of a chubby baby-Krishna, with His right hand in the pitcher full of butter, some of it spilling all over the floor and some stuck on His face. The inside of the *thokur kuth* had framed pictures all over the walls. There was a eighteen-armed *Sharika* astride a lion, a calm looking mustachioed Shiva, sitting bare torso on a skin amidst snow-capped peaks, but without the serpents around his neck and also a well-fed, bejewelled *Ganapati* looking benign and blessing one and all with his raised right hand. That *Shiva,* I remember, looked so distinctly different from the muscle-toned, eight-pack abs, biceps and triceps flaunting, WWF clone we get to see these days. The room had a distinct fragrance about it. In the morning, after coming back from the temple and *kandur* (baker), *Bobuji* would settle down in his *thokur kuth.* His elaborate and meticulous engagement with gods was an everyday spectacle for me.

He would sit in his *thokur kuth*, cross-legged, in his off-white *potsh,* a long-flowing, fine- cotton garment that served like an innerwear under a *pheran* (a traditional woollen gown of sorts, long and loose, without any opening at the front). He would take out the thread that he wore diagonally, over his left shoulder and under his right arm, from under the *potsh* and wear the same over it. Once, I remember, I had demanded a similar thread for myself. He had then told me that it was *Yagnyopaveet* or *yonyi* in short. And that I too will wear it once I had *mekhala sanskaar* (the sacred thread ceremony). He said this with such affection and longing that it seemed that he, more than me, wanted to see me wearing that thread. He then told my mother, in my presence, that we would all go to *Tulamul* for my *mekhala.*

After wearing his *yonyi* on the outside, he would take out a small block of sandalwood, and a small flat platter-like base, made of stone. Then he would take a little water in a tiny copper spoon, from one of the small pitchers, also made of copper and sprinkle it over the stone. Now, he would start rubbing the block of wood on the wet stone surface. All this while he would mumble and mutter, in a distinct rhythm, an incessant torrent of what I later realized were *shlokas* in Sanskrit. Some of them I remember even now, largely due to sheer repetitive hearing but partly also due to my own chanting in later years. A few minutes of constant rubbing would yield a creamy pale-white spread over the stone. He would, then, use the edge of the same piece of wood that he rubbed on the stone, to wipe the stone platter and collect the paste in a very tiny silver bowl. His *chandan tilak* ready, he would now turn to a bunch of smooth ovular shimmering stones of different hues. He called them *shaligrams.* Placed in a bronze platter along with a small *Shivalinga*, he would bathe them, pouring on each, water and milky water, from his small copper pitchers. After draining the 'bathwater' in a different pitcher – a brass *gadva*, he would wipe each one of them, very reverentially, with a piece of cotton cloth kept there, only for this purpose. Then he would place all of them, one by one, on a bed of fresh leaves and flower petals. Now he would use the tip of his right hand's second finger to put the *chandan tyok* (*tilak*) on each of them. This would be followed by rolling of *dhoop* (incense) and making a wick for the *ratnadeep* (a small brass lamp). After lighting both, he would fold his hands, shut his eyes and say his long, seemingly unending, prayers. In the end, he would pick up a small brass bell in one hand and a small platter carrying the *ratnadeep* and *dhoop* in the other, and start singing *Mahimnapaar* followed by *Indraakhi namsa. divi...* I, with barely 2-3 years of schooling, would sit there at the threshold, wide-eyed, observing mesmerised, *Bobuji's* ability to say all that lot, without missing anything or mixing up the order. He never referred, not even once, to any book or paper. To me, then groaning under the weight of learning by rote, it seemed superhuman. Towards the end of this daily ritual, I would wait for my turn to get a *chandan tyok* right between my brows and a *nabad phol* (candy-sized crystal of sugar) with coconut flakes, almonds and raisins. I would also claim my right to carry the sacred *nirmaalya* collected in the *gadwa,* to give *yaarbal* – the Vitasta – its due. “Never alone!” would be his stern caveat, everyday.

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To see him get ready was another experience. He would wear his warm inners called *daraaz* and his socks before pulling a pair of neatly ironed white *churidaars* (long narrow trousers with crinkling over the ankles) over them. Then his thin and warm, torso-hugging woolen vest would disappear under his loose-fitting long-sleeved shirt, with cuffs and collars, but buttons barely going below the solar-plexus. Over this, he would wear his 'coat', well short of his out-hanging shirt. Last of all, he would wear his *safaa* – the headgear. He had a preference for light pink-colored muslin to make his *safaa.* His dressing up was a ritual too, as meticulous and engrossing as his prayer. The care with which he wound his watch before wearing it on his wrist, counted his money before putting it in the safety of the inner coat-pocket and put the loose change in the front pocket was like finishing touches to a canvas. As soon as he would slip into his lace-less shoes, ready to step out, tall and erect, a measured round white *tilak* on his forehead, an office-bag in his left hand, he would look a picture of solemn dignity. In the street, he would acknowledge *namaskaars* called out to him at every step, from all directions. To someone like me, barely 6, 7 or 8 years old, with ever increasing impatience to grow up into an adult, *Bobuji* impressed me with the immense respect and affection he received from everyone. In the evening, I would wait for him. He would often be back with some savouries or other; pakoras, *nadirmonji* (deep fried mashed lotus-stem in a rice-flour batter) or some stuff from the *barabuz* (someone who sells roasted munchies). There was very little conversation between us. All I remember is that I would look at him with awe and admiration. And he would look back with indulgent affection. I found hugging and fawning by other doting relatives too overt and tiresome. His smiling and quiet manner held out a far greater charm.

In the summer of '72, *Bobuji* was not there. I don't recall being very sad. The void of his absence got filled up fast, with inanities. I did, probably, mope around initially, spending many hours everyday, going through his belongings dumped at the *brary-kani* (attic, literally cats' abode). It was a flight of stairs above the *kani*). His old pens, ink-pots, note-pads, pictures, scissors, wooden buttons, safety pins, old postage stamps, used postcards, dusty photo-frames, chipped pottery, bills and receipts, old coins, books, collection of beads, a pouch of *haaru* – marble-sized shells, supposed to be played with on the *Shivaratri*-eve, the list is as endless as the hours I would spend there. Whenever I was found missing those days, everybody knew where to look for me. Wish I too knew, likewise, what, or who, I was looking for. Once, at the *kani*, rummaging through a bag, I found some stuff that normally belonged in the *thokur kuth* – a packet of *dhoop,* small blocks of sandal-wood, some cotton-wicks, lots of jumbled *nariyvan* (red-colored protection cord, ritually tied on the wrist during a puja), a packet of black sesame, some dry flowers and also a small ball of folded and twisted white thread. I unfolded it and it turned out to be a *yonyi.* I, instinctively, wore it over the clothes I was wearing, just as *Bobuji* would during his morning puja. That day, when I went back, my grandmother saw it first. She burst out laughing. As she doubled over, she called out to almost everyone. Soon, I was surrounded, like a spectacle, and the entire household was bringing the roof down, roaring. I did not realize then that I had given them a story, to be told over and over again, for days on end.

I never discussed *Bobuji* with anyone ever again. I remembered him often, and missed him when friends talked about their grandparents. But these days, I feel a very strong tug. I think of all the conversations we could have had. And all that we did not talk about then, as both of us, presumably, were waiting for me to grow up. While growing up, I found very few as committed to living the tradition as *Bobuji* was. My father also says his daily prayers. In fact, to date, the first thing he does when he wakes up, is to open his palms and bring them together, edge to edge, invoke *Lakshmi, Saraswati and Govinda,* say *'Hari Om Tatsat'* and bring the base of his palms to touch the eyes, probably in gratitude for waking up to a brand new day. First thing he does after his bath every morning is to cover his head with a kerchief, sit down in front of our *'cupboard of gods',* light a *dhoop/ agarbatti* and say his prayers. But, it is not the same. *Bobuji's* engagement with the gods was total. After bathing himself in the morning, he would, as if, bathe his soul in the *thokur kuth.* Well, he did not have to catch a 'charter bus' at 8.40 am to reach office by 9.30 am, my father could argue. True! It is also about the life we live here, in Delhi. Cramped living space and a fast-forward pace keep trimming everything down to almost total disappearance. Big cities morph people of varied identities, traditions, languages, cultures, cuisines and couture into an indistinguishable homogenous mass. Almost like programmed humanoids, put together on an assembly-line and sentenced to a life of orchestrated chaos.

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Give it any reason I might, there was very little Kashmiri about the life I lived, growing up. Except during vacations in Kashmir, my opportunities to connect with who I am were few. They were confined to mere festivals and that too, because my mother would celebrate them with great reverence. For me, *Herath (Shivaratri)* meant soaking dozens of walnuts in an earthen pot and having them with small *rotis* made of rice flour; *Vinayaktsoram (Ganesh Chaturthi)* was about delicious *roths* with *kahwa* and *Zanmasattam* (*Krishna Janamashtami,* celebrated a day earlier in Kashmir) for special *khir.* Then there were *Khetshimavas (*the night before new moon at the end of the month of *Poush*) and *Navreh* (Kashmiri New Year's day) too. Each of these occasions also had an elaborate *puja* followed by some special Kashmiri food. Puja, in all the festivals, was always led by my mother. She did it with a lot of heart. Often, she would have tears streaming down her face while singing *gaurim amba, ambaru hakshi*... or *aaysai sharan kastam*... I do not know what moved her to tears every time we prayed together. Was it the nostalgia of how it used to be at the *kani* in Srinagar, with *Bobuji, Ammaji* and siblings, or was it for the pain of not being able to do an elaborate affair befitting the occasion as she was used to, back home? Perhaps, it was just a plain and simple cathartic experience for a deeply devout simple heart. So, barring the spikes that these occasions created, life was monotonously flat. There was little that connected me to who I was and where I came from. On the contrary, everything around me seemed like a blatant attempt to mutate me into something else.

Once, while still in school and commuting in a public bus, I came across a Caucasian in ochre robes. My curiosity led to a conversation and I found that he belonged to ISKCON. When I told him that I was studying Commerce, he asked for my name. Hearing that my surname was Pandit, his hand went straight under the collar of my T-shirt and felt around my neck. He smiled and quipped, "A *Brahmin* with no *janeu* (*yonyi*) and studying to be a *Vaishya*"! I responded with a sheepish grin. Couldn't help admiring the familiarity he had acquired about us. At the same time, attempted a brave argument about how irrelevant it was to talk about caste and hereditary professions. I was trying to live up to my education, offered by a democratic republic which had recently become, by a constitutional amendment, secular and socialist as well. But, deep within, I still wanted my *yonyi*. Without it, something about me felt incomplete. Honestly, I did not even know what I would achieve, if at all, with that loose handspun thread hanging by my left shoulder. Most of my cousins too were without one. It seemed they couldn't care less. For them, it was more of a parental fetish. But then, even the parents never seemed in a hurry to be done with it. They would wait for a big function like a marriage in the joint family to club it with. Through the seventies and eighties, *mekhala sanskar* had already begun to acquire a very perfunctory status. Yet, I nursed this desire till it, almost stealthily, receded to the point of my indifference.

The other day a Sikh colleague surprised me with a lesson in history that my 'education' had very neatly side-stepped. He said that the Sikhs owed their very existence to Kashmiri Pandits. I knew him to be a bit quirky but this one was something else, even by his standards.

Then once, I heard that we were invited to a *mekhala sanskar*. I was curious to see how it happened. Four of them, all cousins, in the age-group of 7 yrs to 18 yrs, sat around fire, wearing unstitched ochre and tonsured. As we ate a variety of snacks, they fasted the whole day long. Throughout, they kept offering the sacred fire a mix of barley, nuts, jaggery, sesame, mustard, kilos of clarified butter and, of course, wood. Towards the end, in the evening, each of the four would carry a large 'begging' bowl and go to everyone present there asking for alms – *bhikshaam dehi* – in Sanskrit. Most would give generous amounts of money and some would even drop wrist watches, minor gold ornaments and other expensive gifts. All the four, *mekhali maharazu* (ceremony 'grooms') as they were called, then head back to their *acharya,* who had initiated them through the ceremony, and place at his feet all the offerings. Finally, all those present bless them by showering flowers and some by profuse hugging and kissing, of the Kashmiri kind. I also heard the *acharya* explain to them the responsibilities that come along with the sacred threads and the daily dos and don'ts. I don't think the 'grooms' paid much attention. They looked ignorant of the significance of what they had just done. Chances are that most of the doting elders around them did not know any better either. All of them seemed eager to see an end to what must have been for them a daylong ordeal.

My *yonyi* had to wait till it could no longer be postponed, exactly three days before my marriage, in June 1987. And it happened in Delhi, not in *Kheer Bhavani* as *Bobuji* had wished it to be. That my *yonyi,* he had so fondly promised me, would turn out to be no more than an unavoidable ritual, would have been an impossibility in his lifetime. That even I would lose interest and merely go through the motions, without the ritual head-shave, would have broken his heart. Who knew that not growing up in Kashmir would mean so many changes? Growing up in Delhi meant living with a superficial identity. A typical nose, along with other total giveaway features, a Kashmiri sounding surname and just a smattering of language do not make a Kashmiri. And certainly not, a Kashmiri like *Bobuji*. No wonder I don't get to see any *Bobujis* these days. Not even in the ostentatious pictures of the deceased, carried in the extravagant obituary ads in the *Koshur Samachar*. One could see them, rarely if at all, sepia toned, in some dusty old frames that they forgot to remove from the walls of a Kashmiri Pandit house.

The other day a Sikh colleague surprised me with a lesson in history that my 'education' had very neatly side-stepped. He said that the Sikhs owed their very existence to Kashmiri Pandits. I knew him to be a bit quirky but this one was something else, even by his standards. He, perhaps, read incredulous written all across my face. And, before my suspicious mind could get to the 'catch' in such a 'historic' credit, he set out to explain; "Remember the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur whose head was sawed off by the most 'pious' of the Mughal emperors, Auranghzeb" he asked, trying to define the context. "The ninth Sikh Guru's 'crime' was that he protested, and fought against the mass annihilation and exodus of 'you Pandits' from Kashmir. They had come to him, led by Pt. Kripa Ram Bhatt, holding their *janeus*, trembling with fear. They sought his protection from a genocidal conversion pursued by the then tyrant Islamic rulers of Kashmir. It was his martyrdom that led his son, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, to raise the *Khalsa* ('the chaste'), to take up the cudgels." A banter that began in a sort of jest ended in a bit of an anti-climax. For details, and to verify, I '*Googled*'. The search yielded even the precise date of the beheading – 11th of November 1675. After what I read, something deep inside me began to melt. Far from taking credit, it turned out to be a debt, a huge one at that. At the next available opportunity, I went to *Gurudwara Sisgunj Sahib,* right where the Guru was martyred. Sitting there listening to the mellifluous *shabad.* I was trying to visualise what the Guru must have endured. I was wondering what misery might have driven 'us Pandits' all the way from Srinagar, to him at Anandpur Saheb.

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The other day I met Dr. Kashi Nath Pandita. He is pushing eighties but looks sprightly and erect. In that formal suit and tie that he wore, he looked elegant. He had in him shades of *Bobuji.* I couldn't help checking on him. I was told that he is one of India's foremost scholars in Persian. Having taught in Tehran University for decades, he is back now. And, he has also translated, from Persian to English, Tuhfat-ul-Ahbaab and Baharistaan-i-Shahi. Both are almost contemporaneous texts, on the medieval history of Kashmir, recorded by those who created it. As I browsed through them, I realised that their authors were innocent of the idea of a 'politically correct history'. At places, the narrative on conversions to Islam is as meticulous as it is gut-wrenching. The myriad events are as detailed and unending as a nightmare.

I also heard, among other things, about *Batta Mazaar.* This place in Srinagar exists even today and is still called by the same name. *Batta* is what we, the Kashmiri Pandits, are called in Kashmiri. It is a distortion of the Sanskrit word *Bhatta* which means a Brahmin scholar. *Mazaar,* of course, is the Persian word for a grave. Here, legend has it that forty maunds of *yonyi* were harvested. My ancestors were given a straightforward choice. They could convert to Islam and live. A mere nod in acceptance with the recitation of *kalima* and the ritual circumcision were not enough anymore. Several *Battas* were found to be secretly practising their 'old' faith despite their conversion. Therefore, now to convince the *ghazis* – the holy warriors of Islam – about the irreversibility of their conversion to Islam, they were forced to commit the un-atonable sin of slaughtering a cow and eating its meat. Or else! The 'or else' bit was a fairly persuasive proposition. Reluctant-to-convert *Battas* were tied up in twos, back-to-back, torso and limbs in tight knots, shoved into a huge sack with a couple of heavy stones, sewed shut and thrown into the lake, at the deep end. In either case, their *yonyas* were collected as proof – forty maunds of it. Just to give an idea, each maund has 40 *seers.* And each *seer* would have at least 500 *yonyis.*

Lately, it is beginning to sink in that the same harmless *yonyi* I fancied wearing at the age of 6 or 7 is, essentially, the leitmotif of the times we Kashmiris have been through. In the past six centuries, these strands of hand-spun cotton, just because deemed sacred, have invited unmitigated vengeance, through the recurring decades of holocaust. In the *yonyi* that I bear on my torso today, I am beginning to sense the spirit of my *Bobuji.* And not just his spirit, but also of the countless *Bobujis* preceding him, who breathed life into this tradition, at the cost of losing their own. Yet, I cannot help but wonder, at times, if it was all really worth it.

History

Kalhana and the Kaliyuga

Jawaharlal Kaul

The Rajatarangini of Kalhana is an extraordinary work of high historical merit .It is not only highly useful in understanding the history of Kashmir right from the Mahabharata period to the middle of the 12th century, it has enabled the Indian historians to solve some difficult riddles of Indian history as well. But in the process, Kalhana seems to have created some riddles of his own -- regarding the date of the Mahabharata war and the advent of Kaliyuga , for instance. "It is wrong to claim that the Bharata war was fought at the end of Kali Yuga", says Kalhana. According to him, "When 653 years of Kaliyuga had passed, the Kuru-Pandavas were living on this earth [or the Kuru-Pandava war took place]." This means that the general assumption that *Kali Kaala* started just after the Mahabharata war began is based on a wrong calculation. . If Kalhana is to be believed, literally almost all the dynasties right from Parikshit's to Nanda's will be thrown off their pedestals .It is therefore important to reopen the question posed by an historian of Kalhana's standing. Kalhana has shown extraordinary analytical talent and judicious attitude in dealing with both historical events as well as persons.

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We know that Kalhana has started his narrative with the legend of Gonada-I, who joined a battle against the powerful Yadava king, Krishna. Gonanda was a distant relative as well a friend of Jarasandha who besieged Mathura but was killed in the battle by Balrama, the elder brother of Krishna. His son Damodara decided to avenge his father's death and attacked Krishna and his followers in Gandhara where Krishna had been invited to attend a *swyamvara* by the local king. Here again the Kashmir king was not lucky -- Krishna killed Damodara in the battle. Being a wise statesman, Krishna could not leave the throne of Kashmir vacant. He convinced the people of Kashmir to install Yashovati, the pregnant queen of Damodara, on the throne. Although the prince was born by the time the Mahabharata war took place, he was too young to be invited by either party to join forces with them. Kashmir, therefore, did not join the Great Bharata War .The prince was named Gonanda -II.

Georg Buhler and M.A. Stein have raised some doubts about the existence of the first two Gonanda kings. According to them, Kalhana's source viz. the Nilamata Purana mentions two Gonandas but Kalhana has introduced a third one after the long gap of the lost kings. In addition, he has described him as the first of the Gonada clan: "The king, who was the first of the Gonanda clan as Raghu was that of Raghus, ruled the land for 35 years "{Book-1] Writes Stein: "It is difficult to believe that some connection has not been established between Gonanda-III and earlier rulers of identical name, if the latter was known to genuine tradition, whether of the people or the learned". On this basis he says that it is "possible that the first two Gonandas are only reflective images", and have been introduced to provide "Kashmiri contemporaries for the heroes of Mahabharata .War". No records were available to Kalhana for as many as 51 kings. So, when after this dark period another king named Gonanda appears on the scene and establishes his own dynasty, Kalhana had to accept him as the first of a new chain of kings

.There is, however, no discrepancy in his calculations. According to him, 653 years had already passed when the eldest Pandva, Yudhishthira ascended the throne. The first king of the Rajatarangini, Gonada–I also became the king on the same day .Kings of the first book of the Rajatarangini [from Gonanda-I to Yudhishthira-I] ruled for 2268 years. Reigns of the later kings lasted for 1328 years. If we add 653 years of Kaliyuga that had already passed at the time of Gonanda-I, the total comes to 4249 years of the Saptarishi era. Kalhana has no problem with the date of the Mahabharata war, but he does not agree with the date of the beginning of Kaliyuga. According to Puranas, Kaliyuga started the day Krishna left the world. Krishna is said to have died 37 years after the war. This means that the Mahabharata war was actually fought in the Dwapara age and not in Kaliyuga. But if we take Kalhana's claim to be true, Krishna had long gone at the time of war. If Krishna did not live during any part of Kaliyuga, how could the war have started more than six centuries after his death ?

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The two traditional calendars which Kalhana, has used may provide the key to the problem. Unfortunately, most western historians have treated casually the two most important eras of India. All ancient texts have relied on the Saptarishi Samvat for calculations of historical dates. The Saptarshi Samvat is based on the apparent movement of Ursa Major through 27 segments of the zodiac. It takes 100 years to traverse one segment. A full cycle therefore takes 2700 years. But since it takes a little more that a year for the Saptarishis to cross one segment, we have to add 18 more years for one full cycle, which makes it 2718 years. Kalhana has used this Samvat extensively. At some places he has quoted the famous astrologer Varahmihira in his support. "On this [point] a decision is furnished by the author of the Brihat Samhita that the Great Bear (*Saptarishis*) which moves from one *nakshatra* (constellation) to another in 100 years has indicated its course." Again while talking about the coronation of Yudhishthira he says, "When King Yudhishtira ruled the earth, the Munis (The Great Bear) stood in the Magha *nakshatra.* The date of his reign was the year 2526 of the era." [*Kharvel Prashasti* -- Chandrakant Bali]. Western scholars instead of trying to understand the real meaning usually take the easiest way available -- they just ignore the *samvat* and arrive at an arbitrary date. Let us take an example. The Puranic text is:-

Yavatparikshito janma yavannandabhishechanam,
Etadvarshashasram tu jneyam panchadashottaram

[When King Parikshita was born it was the year 1015 (of the Saptarishi Samvat) and when Nanda became the king, it was again the year 1015. (of the Saptarishi Samvata)]

It means that one Saprarshi cycle had passed. But most western historians while writing about Mauryan history have translated the *shloka* in entirely different way. Without bothering about the *samvat* they take the figures as the interval between Parikshit and Nanda. It helped them to claim that the Mahabharata war was actually fought around 1500 BC.and to bring Chandragupta Maurya nearer to Alexander.

Kalhana in his Rajatarangini, like many other Sanskrit texts, has used the Shaka Samvat for calculation of dates of events nearer his time. The Shaka era, which is now used in religious and some official documents, starts in 78 AD. But the *samvat* we are concerned with starts 700 hundred years earlier, that is, in 622 BC. Every Indian scholar knows it and has used it extensively. In his Brihat Samhita, Varahamihira has given the inception of the Shaka *samvat* as 2526 years after the Bharata war. The Mahabharata War was fought in 3148 BC. Kalhana says that when he started writing his chronicle, it was 1070 Shaka. Since he has relied upon the authority of Varahmihira, it is most likely that Kalhana was referring to the old Shaka *samvat* and not the one which we all know to have started in 78 A.D. If that is the case, the year 1148 AD .as the date given to Kalhana's work by Stein and others may be questioned .A deeper research on Kalhana's time and his chronicle will inspire the younger generation of historians to re-examine the question of dating in regard to the entire Indian history, whish at best is based on half truths.

Language

Kashmiri as a heritage language and its pedagogy

Radhika Kaul

The term 'heritage language' has been used primarily in the United States till now and that too, not until recently. Loosely speaking, 'heritage language' may refer to any indigenous, colonial, or immigrant language (encompassing most things non-English in the U.S.), and so, it may or may not be regularly used in the home and the community (Fishman 2001). Language educators in the U.S., however, specifically view a 'heritage language student or learner' as one "who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken" and who "speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés 2001). Research on heritage language learners in the U.S. has mostly focused on Spanish - as Hispanic/Latino Americans form the largest ethnic minority in the U.S., though the numerous Native American ethnic groups and immigrant populations have also provided a lot of subject matter.

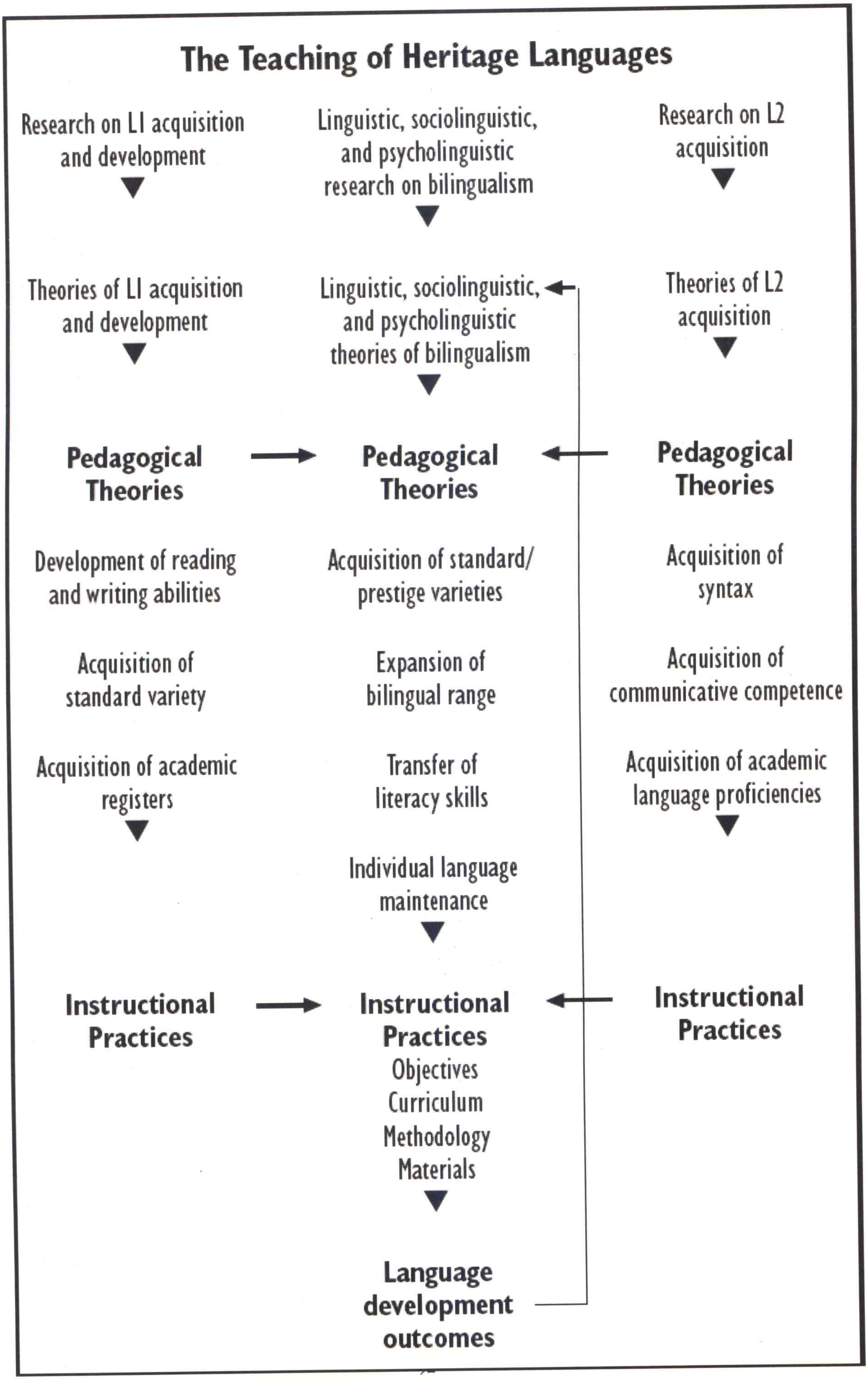
From this definition of 'heritage language speakers', one can understand why most of the Kashmiri (especially Pandit) children born in mainland India after the forced displacement of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 are essentially heritage language speakers of Kashmiri. They have been raised in homes where Kashmiri is spoken, (and hence they understand it) but due to the strong influence of Hindi, from the new people in the new surroundings, and even at home, they end up taking Hindi as a first language. Fluency in spoken Kashmiri is dubious and by the time they turn 5, they are technically bilingual in Kaahmiri and Hindi, but the balance is heavy towards the latter. In school, most of these kids learn English as second language, and use it generally for most of the formal or 'high level' exchanges in school and outside.

As Valdés (2001) explains, for language educators, the heritage language student is different from the traditional foreign language student because he/she already has some "developed functional proficiencies" in the language. This phenomenon can be explained as something in between first language acquisition and second language acquisition. A heritage language (HL) speaker is therefore very different from say, a medium-level classroom learner of a foreign language. The HL speaker may be able to "carry out conversations on everyday topics with ease", and "understand rapidly spoken language that includes a subtle hint of humour" - things the classroom learner will struggle with. However, there may be little or no proficiency in reading and writing and no 'metalanguage' to 'talk' about the grammatical systems of the language itself, even though the grammatical rules are very much internalized. (Valdés 1995, 2001)

An important thing to note is that HL speakers often use the heritage language mostly in the interpersonal mode, i.e. in face-to-face conversation, which is usually domestic -casual and informal. These are what are called 'low level functions', and when a language is consistently used only for such purposes, and not for 'higher' or formal exchanges, it quickly "falls into disuse", (Huffines, 1991).

Sound theories about the best way to proceed with heritage language pedagogy are still a far way off. We know however that the ways to approach it have to come from both first language and second language acquisition. This flowchart from Guadelope Valdez's Heritage Language Speakers: Profiles and Possibilities sums it up quite nicely.

A big roadblock in heritage language pedagogy has been the question of whether to teach the 'standard variety' of the concerned language or the dialect commonly in use in the area or among its people, or even both. This is important in major languages like Spanish, Chinese, Japanese etc. In the case of Kashmiri, we are fortunate as most children in need of heritage language education



The Teaching of Heritage Languages

Research on L1 acquisition and development
Linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic research on bilingualism
Research on L2 acquisition
Theories of L1 acquisition and development
Linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic theories of bilingualism
Theories of L2 acquisition
Pedagogical Theories
Pedagogical Theories
Pedagogical Theories
Development of reading and writing abilities
Acquisition of standard/ prestige varieties
Acquisition of syntax
Acquisition of standard variety
Expansion of bilingual range
Acquisition of communicative competence
Acquisition of academic registers
Transfer of literacy skills
Acquisition of academic language proficiencies
Individual language maintenance
Instructional Practices
Instructional Practices
Objectives
Curriculum
Methodology
Materials
Instructional Practices
Language development outcomes

in Kashmiri have grown up hearing the standard variety of Kashmiri (the language spoken around Srinagar) itself, in their homes and thus there is little to debate.

For our discussion, we focus more on the instruction of heritage languages, currently evolved inevitably from second or foreign language instruction. Before that however, we need to justify heritage language instruction as separate from second or foreign language instruction. This has at least three important bases - first, the psychological and linguistic profiles of HL students and foreign language students are very different, which has already been the subject of much discussion above. Second, and most importantly experience with teaching Spanish as a foreign language to HL speakers of Spanish has shown that HL speakers have problems learning the grammar rules taught in these classes. They become confused by the technical explanation of the aspects of Spanish that they already knew, and often use vocabulary beyond that used by the textbook, or even sometimes the teacher. (Valdés 1981, "Teaching" 305). The challenges of teaching Spanish to students who have no experience with the language are clearly different from those involved in helping students develop proficiency in a language in which they already have considerable competence (Bills, 1997 in Peyton et al, 2001). Thirdly, seeing it more from a cultural perspective, heritage language instructors need to encourage more use of the HL in both day-to-day and formal situations, which could potentially increase chances of the heritage language being passed onto the next generation. As Fishman (1991) says, language maintenance is most dependent on transmission across generations.

Fundamentally, teachers need to understand that these students need an approach that builds on what they bring to the classroom rather than one that begins at ground zero. (Gutiérrez, 1997)

Since heritage language teaching in Spanish has seen decades of research and attention now, it is only natural that Kashmiri follow the footsteps of the Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) program – emulate key projects and publications, and learn from key debates. A cornerstone in the SNS program was the volume entitled, "Teaching Spanish to the Hispanic Bilingual : Issues, Aims and Methods" by G. Valdez, A.G. Lozano, R. Garcia-Moya. This is a compilation of 20 articles grouped under four broad headings - Basic Theoretical Considerations, Implementing Courses in Spanish for Native Speakers : Some Practical Considerations and Some Selected Models, and finally, Evaluation.

There is a dire need for a similar project in Kashmiri. The major caveat in following the Spanish example is obviously the huge difference in the numbers of Spanish HL speakers in the US and Kashmiri HL speakers in India. The former is around 20 million and while there is no accurate number for the latter, a rough estimate would be around 0.2-0.3 million. Also Kashmiri HL speakers are found in much smaller pockets as compared to Chicanos and Hispanics. This also means that Kashmiri can not be introduced in schools or colleges in mainland India – the numbers are just too small. HL instruction can only be carried out in community-run classes in areas with relatively high density of Kashmiri HL speakers. We can, of course, study the model syllabi prepared for instruction of Spanish to Native Speakers to prepare syllabi for classroom as well as out-of-classroom instruction of Kashmiri as a heritage language. "Teaching Spanish to Native Speakers of Spanish : A Collection of Model Syllabi" by Guadelupe Valdez and Richard V. Tuschner is a valuable document in that regard.

A number of "Learn Kashmiri" projects have been made as well. There is good pedagogical material in there (scattered among the different projects), but all of them assume the reader to be a complete novice and hence hold the risk of becoming boring and frustrating for a HL speaker, like me. We now look more in detail into these existing "Learn Kashmiri" courses – most of which are now online – and see how good they are or why they aren't any good, from a heritage language instruction point of view.

1) Prof Braj B. Kachru has got out an "Introduction to Spoken Kashmiri" described as 'A Basic Course and Reference Manual for Learning and Teaching Kashmiri as a Second Language' with audio clips, online. http://www.koshur.org/SpokenKashmiri/toc.html
It also has three parts - the first part includes functional conversations (with coolie, a boatman, milkman etc), the second part has narrative tests on important Kashmiri people and places and the third part has Kashmiri poems. The course also uses a modified Roman alphabet for Kashmiri with English translations.

On the whole, this is a very polished course. Even though images are used for Kashmiri sentences and words, the script is very legible and understandable even without reading the sound guide. Part one has one too many conversations, one could say – the ones with the tea-seller, butcher, coolie, hotel-owner etc. get redundant after a while. However, the conversations towards the end regarding visiting important tourist destinations and temples are very good – they are not pointless question-answer strings, and even though their presence makes it look like a language guide for tourists, one must remember that most HL speakers of Kashmiri actually know little beyond what a tourist might know of Kashmir. The only glitch here is that the audio files are not continuous whole conversations, but are strings of sentences one after the other – which makes it sound very unnatural and strained.

The second and third parts are the major strengths of this course - the narrative texts are very good, on important subjects, and of reasonable length. Importantly, the translations are not given right after a Kashmiri sentence. Reading the texts felt like a nice test. The poems are also a very nice idea – they get you at least a step closer to literature. The audio files here are better than in part 1, but could be better still.

The weakness of this very good course for our discussion is only the fact that it is a Spoken Language course – and hence has no grammar notes, drills and exercises. There is however, a glossary of Kashmiri words, which can be used for reference.

2). Let's Learn Kashmiri by Omkar Nath Wakhlu and Bharat Wakhlu. Srinagar, This is available online for free (with audio clips) at http://www.koshur.org/LearnKashmiri/index.html and it has also been published as a book without audio clips (which is not readily available)

It uses a modified Roman script which is explained in the beginning chapters. I especially liked the chapters on counting numbers, differentiating sounds, notes on grammar (which could have been elaborated), ordinals and fractional numbers, days of the week, names of relations etc., which are often ignored by children (like me) and teaching material alike, and hence, important.
The question-answer and the 'remember by heart' chapters are perhaps the most useless, as they go on and on about the parts of the language in which the HL speaker is most efficient. Material like this has the potential to disinterest the learner and hence must be used wisely. The other 'boring' chapters are the ones containing glossaries of nouns, adjectives and verbs. It would have been much better if the same words had been introduced in reading passages – which is the main weakness of this course. At the end of actually doing the course, I had definitely learnt more words in Kashmiri – including numbers, days, ordinals, etc. but little beyond that. More complicated structures in the language could have been touched, and much more reading material and lessons on them could have been provided as well.

3) Prof O.N. Koul seems to have done a lot.

a) There is Spoken Kashmiri : A language course whish is available online, with audio clips. http://www.koshur.org/Kashmiri/chapter1/index.html. The book is in an interesting format. For every chapter, there is first a main lesson involving Kashmiri sentences (simple one liners to complex conversation) in a modified Devanagari script with English translations; then there is a drill based on that (using repetition, substitution and transformation), then an exercise on the whole chapter, followed by grammar notes (rules use in that chapter) and finally a section on vocabulary (words learnt in that chapter). That is more or less the only interesting feature of the course. There are numerous problems - a) Even though such chapters are important, they can't totally constitute a course. b) Even if you only keep these chapters – the main lessons need to have at least three-four Kashmiri sentences strung together and not English translations after each Kashmiri sentence. c) The script is not easily decipherable. d) The grammar notes at the end of the chapter are mired with technicalities. e)This is after all only a "spoken" Kashmiri course, and hence targets only a small (also slightly inconsequential part of HL instruction).

b) He has also got out a "Handbook on audio cassette course in kashmiri", http://koshur.org/ciil/index.html which is divided into three parts. Two parts deal with pronunciation - the first part deals with introducing vowel sounds, and the second part deals with consonant sounds. The third parts deals with structure, and introduces various grammar topics through conversation. This is also a disappointing course due to a number of reasons – a) The script, an essentially Roman script is pathetic. b) Like the Spoken Kashmiri course, there is too much reliance on question answers in Kashmiri with instant English translations and little else of substance.
c) He has also got out an "Intermediate course in

Kashmiri" in the Persio-Arabic script. And since I can read nothing into that, I can't describe it here. The link is this - http://iils.org/pdf/An%20Intermediate%20Course%20in%20Kashmiri.pdf

d) Finally, he has got out a "Modern Kashmiri Grammar" along with Kashi Wali which is basically a kind of reference - a comprehensive grammar, not to be used for teaching purposes. http://iils.org/pdf/ModernKashmiriGrammar.pdf

4) As part of Project Zaan, M.K Raina and Neelam Trakru have got out a "Basic Reader for the Kashmiri language". http://koshur.org/Reader/index.html It uses a modified Devanagari alphabet for Kashmiri with english translations. Section 1 introduces the "Nagari-Kashmiri" alphabet it uses (wastes too much time and energy on it, more like); Section 2 involves more explanation with vowel and consonants (again wastes too much time and energy on it) as well as some pointless reading texts and question-answer strings. Section 3, called Translation vocabulary is more of a list of glossaries of names of fruits, vegetables, 1-50 numbers etc., which could have been appreciated had it been supporting some substance, rather than pretending to be the substance itself.

5)Roop Krishen Bhat has got out a two part "Let's Learn Kashmiri" course. The first part is a primer http://www.koshur.org/pdf/primer.pdf, and the second is a reader http://www.koshur.org/pdf/reader.pdf. The primer is essentially useless for HL instruction as most children being targeted are pretty literate in both the Devanagari and Roman scripts. The script used in both, however, is a very clear and legible modified Devanagari script, which puts me in two minds regarding which script I would personally prefer. The Devanagari script is obviously better for people of, say, my parents' generation but for the generation of Kashmiri children targeted as HL learners, I think the Roman script would make things more popular. Uncomfortable as it may be to accept, but English gets more than double the respect Hindi gets today, at least in middle-class India, and since no existing script is actually good for writing Kashmiri (all require modifications) it would be intelligent to turn the English-Hindi stereotype towards and not against oneself. The reader has some useful conversations and texts; the exercises are comprehensive but have the tendency to get kiddish and redundant. Also, since the medium of instruction is Kashmiri as well, things can get inconvenient.

So, all in all, this is what I, as a heritage language speaker of Kashmiri, would like to see in an HL instruction course – taking ideas from the projects above as well as adding a few of my own :

- Use of a modified Roman script, explained in about one or two chapters
- Chapters having good quality reading passages as lessons followed by exercises and grammar and vocabulary notes; these should form the major component of the course.
- Chapters based on well-developed conversations to introduce words, groups of words and important subjects of discussion.
- Chapters based on conversations which might actually happen between people (i.e. the more complicated ones) to show the subtle use of humor, proverbs and idiosyncratic phrases.
- Show a deliberate attempt to introduce forms and words in both the spoken and written language not used in daily speech i.e. attempt to break into the high registers of Kashmiri using a few conversations and reading passages.
- Chapter on poems and understanding Kashmiri verse, explaining phrases often used.
- No English translations immediately after Kashmiri lines.
- Audio files with continuous, clear and real-like audio
- Chapter on pronunciation and stress, especially differentiating different sounds of Kashmiri in different words, and the subtle sound phonetic changes with change in number, tense and gender of Kashmiri words
- Appropriate glossaries for counting numbers, ordinals and fractional numbers, days of the week, names of fruits and vegetables, names of relations, other important nouns, adjectives and verbs, preferably in the end..

The way forward for a new 'Kashmiri for heritage language speakers' course will involve incorporating the framework and structure of Spanish HL instruction syllabi but using material from these existing Learn Kashmiri projects. This, of course, can only be done with the collaboration of the concerned people.

We finally get to the larger challenge of dissemination of this course i.e. practically implementing it. One option is propagating out-of-classroom self learning – which depends a lot on publicity, parental motivation and of course, self-motivation.

Classroom teaching, as said before, however, has to be a big, concerted community-based initiative; a good example can be the "Sunday schools" established by East Asian immigrants in the US for language instruction in Japanese and Chinese. Things like 5-day workshops can't help because language learning and enhancement are long, continuous processes. Next, since the community of HL speakers of Kashmiri consists of a few pockets of high concentration (like the whole of Jammu, areas in the National Capital Region, Mumbai and Pune) which are geographically spaced out, we need to centrally train native Kashmiri speaking people within the local communities to teach Kashmiri as a heritage language using the course materials prepared. Using local resources is the best way to cover maximum area and reduce cost. Finally, once the original course – Kashmiri for heritage language speakers – takes off nicely, we need to construct a second course on Kashmiri history and literature, which, apart from provoking academic interest in Kashmir in these children, would also be the perfect forum to exercise their knowledge of the language, and learn more forms of the high registers of Kashmiri.

I sometimes believe that this is one small chance we have been given. Most Kashmiri Pandit children born after 1990 are at least HL speakers of Kashmiri – a much better state than not knowing any Kashmiri at all. To build upon that HL ability is the only hope we have. We must also remember that we are fighting nature here – when a family moves from its native place to a new place, it is but natural that individuals born in the next generation would be bilingual and then gradually shift towards the language of the new place and finally forget the native language in the next generation or two. The story here has much more weight because a) the 'moving' was not voluntary, but very much forced and b) since an entire community was 'moved', the consequences of loss of language would be virtual destruction of the community; the absolution of its very identity. The death of a language can never be the death of a language alone. This, is only so that I don't see that day.

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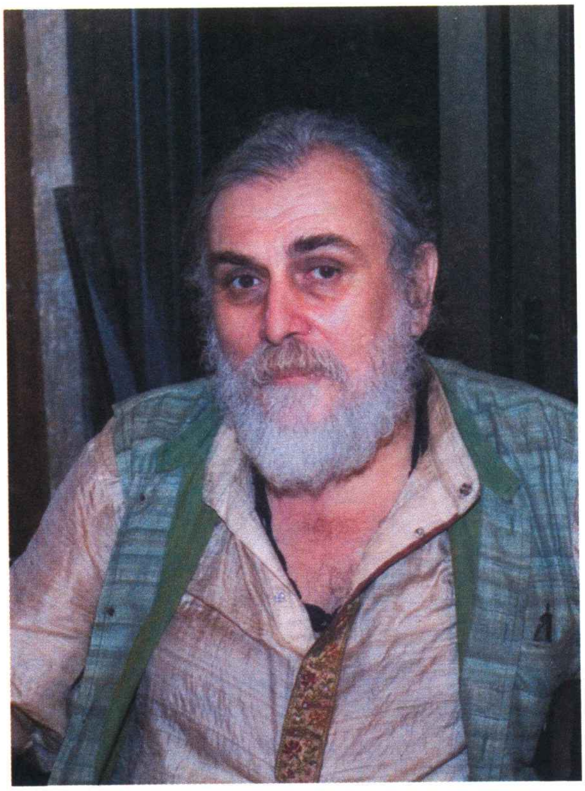
Profile

A Great Modern Day Master of Kashmir Shaiva Tradtions

Mark S. G. Dyczkowski

Neeraj Santoshi

Has the lineage of Shaiva masters,especially in the context of oral tradition and *guru- shishya parampara*, that existed in the Himalayan valley of Kashmir for over a millennium, ended? Was Swami Lakshaman joo the last great master in the lineage? Is the non-dual Shaiva tradition on decline or dying in the land of its birth? Is observing some festivals and rituals giving us a false feeling of being Shaivites? Are we being hypocrites who keep on harping about Shaiva roots and ignore the fact that Shaiva traditions are fading from the Kashmiri ethos? If renowned physicists are discovering the parallels between Spanda and quantum physics, why our leaders and scholars have failed to tell us about even the simplest of our Shaiva traditions and their significance in the modern idiom? Do they really know or understand it themselves? How many of them would have read all the volumes of Abhinavgupta's masterpiece Tantraloka, forget understanding it and teaching it?



It pains me to find that our elders have failed in passing on the teachings and the essence of this great philosophy to the younger generation. Consequently those belonging to our generation are like potted plants lying on dusty staircases of high-rise buildings, content with our stunted and claustrophobic potted roots. Phony words and claims of great Shaiva heritage are no substitute for the real transmission, for real earthy touch.

In this sense, I feel like a spiritual orphan, who is trying to fathom the sea of Shaivism on his own with few paper boats (books, cyberworld) and limited knowledge. Nietzsche says somewhere ``One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil". Given the stature of Shaiva Masters like Abhinavgupta, Vasugupta or Swami Ram, we have really been very bad re-payers.

Our generation watches the rituals and traditions of our community in exile with great amusement, unaware of their underlying spiritual significance. The fact is that elaborate rituals are now skipped on most occasions and short cuts are being taken -- be it in rituals related to birth, death, birthdays or marriages. Gloss has overtaken most of our functions, while the spiritual side has taken a backseat. It seems that we are slowly moving towards a collective spiritual amnesia.

The realization of this spiritual black hole dawned on me, when a few years back I met the world famous authority on Tantra and Kashmir Shaivism, Mark S. J. Dyczkowski, who originally hails from Russia, in Jammu. It was a dream come true, an encounter that exposed my ignorance about the real significance of Shaivism and my superficial academic understanding of it.

I had always deeply desired to see a real Shaiva master and talk with him or her or at least be face to face with a real scholar who knows the secrets of the Shaiva tradition of Kashmir. I hardly know of any living Kashmiri who can be said to be a living Shaiva master or a real Shaiavacharya who has fathomed its profound mysteries. May be there are unknown masters, but almost no one is there in the public domain who can be given the credit for taking the Shaivist lineage forward.

Dyczkowski was in Jammu to attend a conference. When I came to know about it, I was very excited. After few enquiries that day, I came to know he was in the famous Raghunath Sanskrit Library, looking for some ancient texts. I was not aware where the famous Library, whose catalogue of nearly 6000 rare Sanskrit texts was prepared by Sir Aurel Stein himself in 1894, was.

I knew it was somewhere near the Raghunath temple. After half an hour of search and directions from the local shopkeepers, I reached the Library. I made a mental map of questions in English, which I had to ask. For me, Dyczkowski is a Russian scholar, who had studied Shaivism, a foreign scholar. I had imagined him as a high brow scholar, with an air of aloofness and absentmindedness, who would dish out replies in Hinglish accent. But when I saw him, I was taken aback. He was the antithesis of everything that I had imagined about him. He was sitting comfortably in a chair in front of the Library. Basking in the winter sun and conversing with a scholar in charge of the Library, he was eating groundnuts with a laidback approach, his demeanour never suggesting that he was the man who wrote the famous 'Doctrine of Vibration'. Wearing a casual *kurta-pajama*, with a silky white beard and a shining face, he looked like a *rishi* from some ancient era. His eyes had the freshness of wonder and a soft glint of a child. He spoke in fluent Hindi, surprising me further. And I switched over to Hindi as well, loving his gentle sprinkling of Sanskrit *shlokas* intermittently.

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After introducing myself, I started asking him general questions, trying to cover-up my ignorance of the higher topics of which he was a master. When I told him that even now there are no institutions or research centres dedicated to the study of Shaivism in the land of its birth, he was surprised, but didn't show much emotion. He told me that it was indeed surprising that while in many parts of the world, hundreds of institutions and scholars are dedicatedly researching various facets of Kashmiri Shaivism and the works of various Shaiva masters like Abhinavgupta, Vasugupta, Utpaladeva, Bhatta Kalatta and so on, here, in their birth land, nothing of that sort was happening .

When I asked him how he came to be initiated into the mysteries of Shaivism. Looking far into the distance, as if looking at the fast collage of the past events, he recalled that it was the great Shaiva master Swami Lakshaman joo who had initiated him in 1976. Even after studying different aspects of Shaivism for the last four decades, I could see the reverence in his eyes for his Master.

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Then suddenly, as if hinting that my earlier question was not that important or foolish, he said, "To understand the mysteries of Shaivism, one needs the grace of Lord Shiva and then dedicated efforts in the right direction".

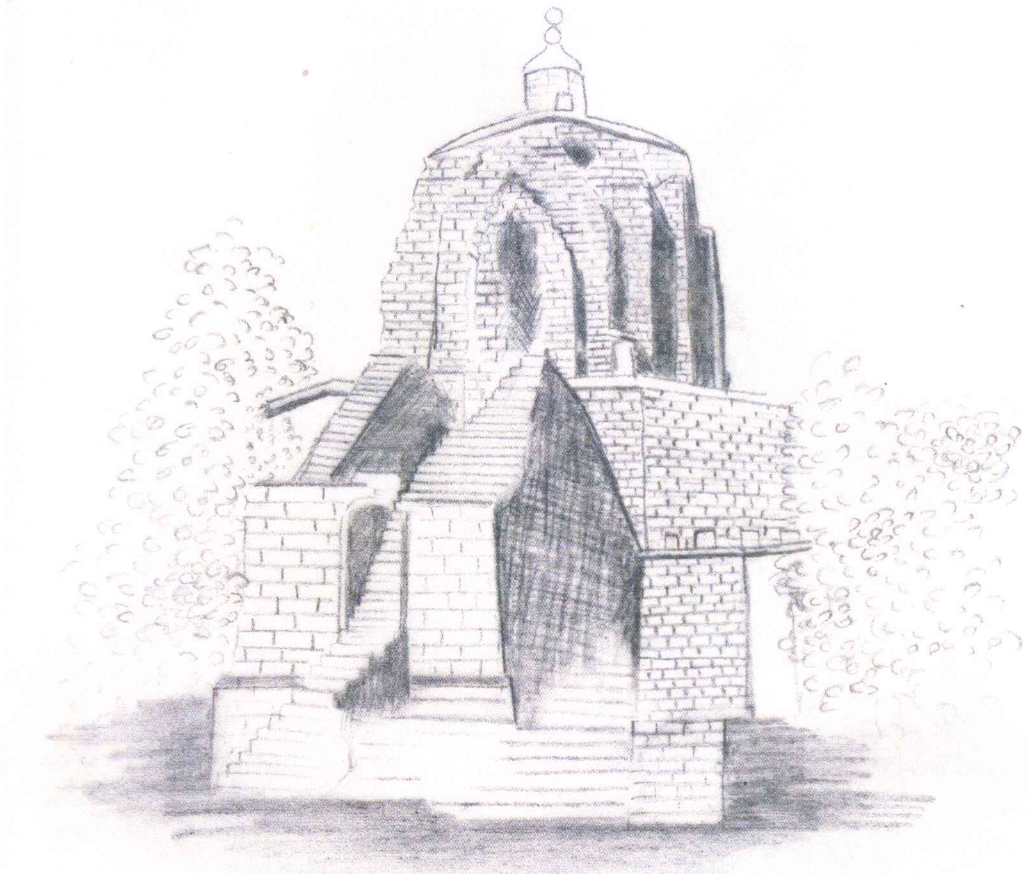
As if questioning my stress on books and institutions, Mark said with a childlike innocence, ``If the grace of Shiva is there , then only a spark will ignite your soul, then only access to the teachings of Shaivism through different mediums like books, CDs, audio cassettes, book exhibitions, workshops, seminars and lectures of scholars will help and mature your recognition" .

On his relations with the Ishwar ashram, the ashram of Swami Lakshaman joo, he said that he was not much in touch, hinting subtly that he had got disillusioned with the ashram affairs after the departure of the Master. That day I felt I had met a person, who has transcended the scholarship of Shaivism and was now moving on the higher paths as a seeker. His life is an evidence of his dedication towards understanding the mysteries of Shaivagama. He has devoted his whole life to the study, collation, edition, translation and interpretation of manuscripts of the Shaiva and Shakta Tantras. Dyczkowski, who lives and works in Benares is a Masters in Philosophy and Indian Religion from Benares Hindu University and has studied Sanskrit grammar and literature with Pandit Ambikadatta Upadhyaya. After graduating from BHU, he went to England, finished his doctorate in 1980 at Oxford University where he studied the Spanda School of Kashmiri Shaivism under the eminent scholar, Prof Alexis Sanderson. In 1980 he came back to Benares and started his research work.

This man who has authored 'The Aphorisms of Siva', 'The Stanzas on Vibration', a 14- volume work on the Kubajika Tantra, had no scholarly airs about himself. He seemed a simple Shaiva *bhakta* to me, a modern day *rishi*. His simple demeanour seemed to defy the fact that he is arguably one of the most original and profound scholar of Hindu Tantras alive today. As a community, I feel ashamed that we don't invite him to our functions, for lectures, discourses, workshops or for felicitating him. Most of our leaders are busy in petty politics, factionalism and mini power struggles.

If this generation fails to carry forward the Shaiva traditions and the lineage, a day will come when all that will be left will be a swelled fan list on Shaivism groups on social sites like Facebook and hollow claims of our great Shaiva heritage. The real touch of a master, a real seeker is missing somewhere....words and clicks help to a certain level...but primarily one needs grace, guidance and a guru.

That day when I accompanied Mark Dyczkowski in an auto-rickshaw, back to his University guestroom, where he was staying, I felt his silent grace and love descend on me -- it was wordless. When we took leave of each other, he just smiled, with his eyes beaming with childlike simplicity, and I felt as if all the Shaiva masters of the last one millennium were smiling at me. I recognized in his eyes a somewhat similar expression that I had once seen as a kid in the compassionate eyes of Swami Lakshaman joo, while he blessed me and gave me handfuls of *prasad* at his Ishwar Ashram in Kashmir.

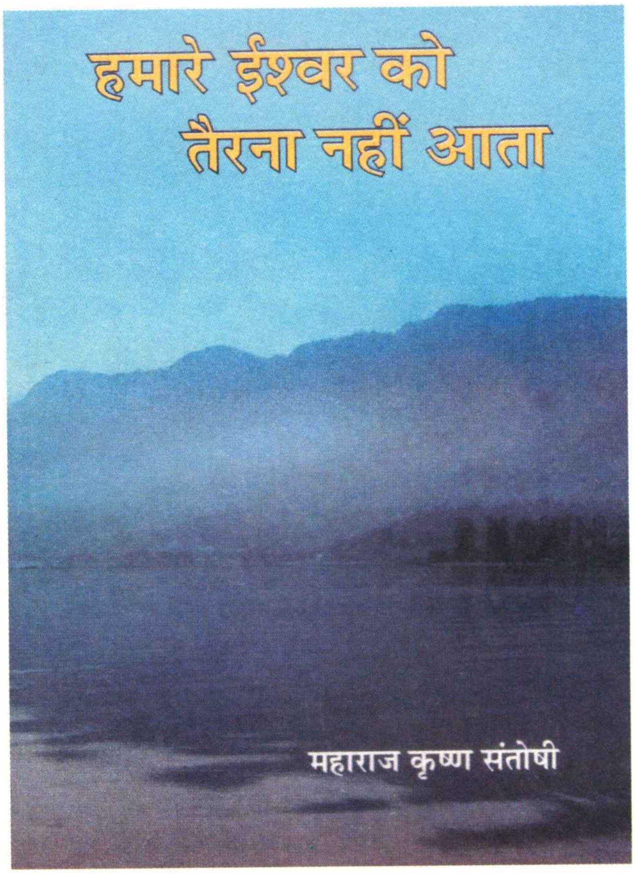


Book Review

Hamare Ishwar ko Tairna Nahin Aata

Geetika Kaw Kher

The apt title *'Hamare Ishwar ko Tairna Nahi Aata'*, (**'Our God Does Not Know How to Swim'**) poignantly betrays the feeling of helplessness, and resignation to a tragic fate of which the stories of this recent collection of Maharj Krishan Santoshi talk about, directly or indirectly. Comprising thirteen stories revolving around the author's constant yearning for Kashmir, it makes a thought provoking and emotionally charged reading.



Having read earlier Hindi poems by Santoshi and finding them intense and extremely stimulating, it was with a feeling of excitement and curiosity that I started reading this book of his short stories. Every writer has his / her own concerns and issues that are close to his / her heart, and these get articulated in his / her writings, regardless of the genre in which they are presented. The ability to express oneself with equal effect in poetry as well as prose, however, is a rare quality and this collection of short stories shows how versatile Santoshi is in both. An accomplished poet that he is, with his poems presenting extremely disturbing images of the torment of being uprooted from his native soil, it is the lost land of Kashmir again that makes every story in this collection engaging for the reader . Whether it is a poem like '*Vitasta ka teesra kinara*' or stories like '*Ghar Devta*', '*Akanandun*', it is the feeling of loss of home that makes them so moving. This loss becomes excruciatingly intensified when it gets contrasted with accounts of the writer's initial trying years in Jammu, which he has spent facing harsh weather, indifferent attitude of the local people, uncertainties of future and fears of ghettoization combined with the hurt caused by petty politics played by regional players. All these become points of torture for his soul -- a soul that keeps wondering what went wrong, why did our deities forsake us, why did they became mute spectators when we were thrown out of our houses. The stories can thus be called an anguished cry of a sensitive author helplessly suffering the torments of exile and trying to give expression in words to the blazing hell has been passing through. And what distinguishes Santoshi is the powerful idiom that he has acquired as a writer during these years of exile.

Use of metaphors by writers to emphasize a point and to enhance the impact on of their writing on the readers' mind is a common practice, but to use an actual incident as a metaphor or to see it as a premonition of the future days to come is what makes the story *'Ladai'* so poignant. The story is about two bulls, one belonging to a Pandit and the other to a Muslim family, engaged in fighting. The intense reaction of the onlookers belonging to the Muslim community when the bull belonging to a Pandit emerges as the winner in the fight symbolizes the pent up feelings of anger of and hated against the Pandit minority that were vented in the in 1990's. The words **"your bull should be stronger if you want it to win the fight"** said in jest by the narrator to his Muslim friend, seem to have been turned into an actuality by the latter when, as most of us witnessed, there was no stopping the "bull". The pain of exile comes across strongly in stories like ***'Bicchu ghass'*** and ***'Aayenge lautkar ham ay vatan'***, which are more of the nature of personal memoirs of event taking place during the early days of the Pandits' exodus. Yet, despite the emotional tone of this and other stories, the author manages to raise extremely important questions regarding who has benefited from this large scale exodus. Are Kashmiri Muslims any better off without the Kasmiri Pandits around? Can there be suffering be only on one side with other side remaining completely unaffected? Is the price that Kashmir Muslims have paid in terms of their life and honor worth what they have today? Questions that have no one answer but that make us think about the absurdity and futility of violence. ***'Kokh'***, one such story about three Muslim mothers who lost their sons in different manners to this madness is heart wrenching and problematizes the whole issue of *azaadi.*

The stories can be likened to a steady river that just flows gaining meaning and momentum as it proceeds and when this flow ends it leaves your eyes tearful, and yet a smile also lights up your face and lingers on your lips.

What is noteworthy is that the stories are not lopsided. They give a fair view of the situation. They talk about the timidity of Kashmiri Pandits, the pain of the Muslim mothers who lost their sons to mindless jihad, and of Muslims who felt things were not right but could not speak out for the fear of the gun. While the author refers to his friends amongst Kashmiri Muslims, he also talks about the mistrust and hatred they harbor as a group against the Pandits. The narrator words to a Kashmiri Muslim friend ' ***bheed me tum vahshi ho jaate ho***" express it all. The author hints at the common culture of friendship and goodwill, that is a great binding force until religion does them part. ***'Apharan'*** is one such story where this irony of the situation finds full expression.

In this collection, all these thread that bind the communities in a bond, have been deftly woven by Santoshi into sensitive stories. Nowhere things look contrived or feelings affected. The stories can be likened to a steady river that just flows gaining meaning and momentum as it proceeds and when this flow ends it leaves your eyes tearful, and yet a smile also lights up your face and lingers on your lips. Reading the stories together with my husband I found leaving me deeply moved. They were also read and enjoyed by my mother in law as well as my maid, a young girl from Orissa with similar feelings. We even read a few of the stories to our four-year-old daughter who listens to everything about Kashmir with rapt attention and awe as if listening to a fairy tale. This shows how their magic works

कहानी

दाराशिकोह की मौत

महाराजकृष्ण संतोषी

दरवाज़ा खुला और भीतर एक दढ़ियल सा आदमी दाखिल हुआ। उस समय मैं अपने लिखे हुए कुछ ज़रूरी नोट्स देख रहा था। दरअसल मैं एक ऐतिहासिक नाटक लिखने की कोशिश में था और विभिन्न इतिहास ग्रन्थों से लिए कुछ नोट्स आपस में मिला रहा था। मैने उस आदमी को गौर से देखा। ऐसा लगा जैसे वह इतिहास का कोई पात्र हो। वेशभूशा और कदकाठी से वह आज का आदमी लग ही नहीं रहा था। "क्षमा करना मैंने आपको पहचाना नहीं," सभ्य लहज़े में मैने कहा। "कैसे पहचानोगे?, कभी मैं इस मुल्क का बरदशाह हुआ करता था।" "बादशाह !" मैंने हैरत के साथ पूछा। " हां बादशाह..... " मुझे शक हुआ कि यह आदमी किसी नाटक कंपनी से भागा हुआ कलाकार है जो पगला गया है। "आप कहां से पधारें हैं? " मैंने यूं ही कहा। "आगरा से।" यह सुनते ही मेरा शक विश्वास में बदल गया। सचमुच यह कलाकार बावरा हो गया है। अन्यथा वह खुद को हिंदुस्तान का बादशाह नही कहता। "आप का नाम क्या है, जहांपनाह?" मेरे स्वर में व्यंग्य था। " औरंगज़ेब!.... " मैने जैसे कुछ सुना ही नहीं। उस ने दुबारा कहा– "औरंगज़ेब!" मैं भी मसखरी के मूड में आ गया था। "जहांपनाह ! आप तो कब के मर चुके हैं.... ।" " हां! "फिर किस वजह से अपनी कब्र से बाहर निकल आए हैं?" " कई दिनों से तुमने मेरे सुकून की नींद में खलल डाला है.. ." "वह कैसे सुल्तान?" इस बार मैं कुछ संजीदा हो गया था। " क्या यह सच नहीं कि तुम मेरे भाई दाराशिकोह पर नाटक लिख रहे हो?" उसने ऐसे पूछा जैसे किसी अपराधी से पूछा जाता है। "हां, यह सच है!" मैंने जवाब दिया। "पर मेरे होते हुए तुम दाराशिकोह पर नाटक कैसे लिख सकते हो?" "क्यों नहीं लिख सकता?" मेरे स्वर में विरोध था। "क्योंकि वह सिरफिरा था.... बहकी–बहकी बातें किया करता था और काफिरों की किताबें पढ़ता रहता था।" मैंने देखा औरंगज़ेब की आंखों से चिनगारियां निकल रही थीं। पर मैं भी निर्भय था। मैंने भी एक लेखक की तरह तर्क किया। " वह सिरफिरा नहीं बहुत बड़ा आलिम था। " "नहीं वह काफिर था।" ''नहीं वह सूफी था।" "नहीं वह दीन का दुश्मन था।" " नहीं वह सच्चा इंसान–दोस्त था।" कुछ लम्हे यूं ही बीत गए। ऐसा लगा औरंज़ेब कुछ बड़बड़ा रहा है। पर मैं कुछ और सूनने के मूड़ में नहीं था। जाने से पहले वह यह धमकी देना नहीं भूला कि अगर मैंने दाराशिकोह पर नाटक लिखा तो अच्छा नहीं होगा। कई दिनों बाद का किस्सा है। रात का समय था। दरवाज़े पर दस्तक हुई और जब मैने दरवाज़ा खोला तो सामने कोई दरवेश सा आदमी खड़ा था जो बेहद डरा–डरा सा लग रहा था।" क्या चाहिए?" मैने पूछा।" पनाह "वह बोला। " हम अजनबियों को पनाह नहीं देते... क्या पता वह कोई... ।"उसने मुझे वाक्य पूरा नहीं करने दिया।"मैं ऐसा नहीं हूं.. " "उसने कहा।"क्या भरोसा ""सच कहता हूं मैं ऐसा नहीं हूं।''... कुछ रूककर.... मैं दाराशिकोह हूं.. . " "दाराशिकोह . . . . वह मुग़ल सल्तनत का राजकुमार.... " मेरा मुंह आश्चर्य से खुला का खुला रह गया..... खुशी भरी एक चीख निकलते निकलते मेरे गले में अटक सी गई। कैसा संयोग था.... मेरे नाटक का नायक मेरे सामने खड़ा था। न कौई राजसी ठाट, न आंखों में गुरूर, साधारण सी वेशभूषा के बावजूद कितना, सौम्य कितना आकर्षक। खाना खाने के बाद मेरी दाराशिकोह से खूब बातें होने लगीं। सचमुच वह ज्ञान का विलक्षण भंडार था, परंतु गर्व का लेश भी नहीं। बातों ही बातों में उसने मुझे बताया कि औंरगज़ेब ने उसे यह धमकी दी है कि अगर वह किसी नाटक का नायक बना तो

"हां, यह सच है!" मैंने जवाब दिया। "पर मेरे होते हुए तुम दाराशिकोह पर नाटक कैसे लिख सकते हो?" "क्यों नहीं लिख सकता?" मेरे स्वर में विरोध था। "क्योंकि वह सिरफिरा था... बहकी–बहकी बातें किया करता था और काफिरों की किताबें पढ़ता रहता था।"

अच्छा नहीं होगा। मुझे जो धमकी औंरगज़ेब से मिली थी, दाराशिकोह को शायद उसकी जानकारी नहीं थी। सुबह मेरे जागने से पहले ही दाराशिकोह जाग गया था। मैंने देखा वह आंख बंद किए प्रार्थना की मुद्रा में कुछ बुदबुदा रहा था। उसे प्रार्थना करते हुए देखकर मुझे लगा यह शख्स तो कुछ अलग ही दिख रहा है। यह न तो हिंदू जैसा दिख रहा है, न मुसलमान जैसा। यह तो सिर्फ एक आम इंसान सा दिख रहा है..... जिसकी प्रार्थना का कोई धर्म नहीं होता। जब मैं नहा–धोकर बैठक में वापस आया तो देखा वह अपनी डायरी में कुछ लिख रहा था। मैंने पूछना मुनासिब नहीं समझा। पर उसने खुद ही बताया कि वह एक अधूरी नज़्म पूरी कर रहा था। फिर खुद ही पूछा, "सुनाऊं?" पर शायद यह सोचकर कि मुझे फ़ारसी नहीं आती, वह चुप रहा।

अचानक उसने पूछा, "अब क्या सोचा है आपने?" ''किस बारे में?" मैने जानना चाहा। "क्या अब भी मुझ पर नाटक लिखेंगे?" यह सुनकर मै गंभीर हो गया। कुछ नहीं बोला। उसने फिर पूछा और मैंने जब "हां!" कहा तो वह चौंक गया! कहा, "पर औंरगज़ेब?" औंरगज़ेब को हिन्दी पढ़ना कहां आता है?" यह सुनकर दाराशिकोह के होठों पर एक हल्की सी मुस्कान की रेखा नमूदार हुई। दाराशिकोह लौट गया। कहां? कुछ पता नहीं! क्या पता हिंदुस्तान में दाराशिकोह के लिए कोई जगह बची ही न हो.... पर आसपास की हवा उसकी उपस्थिति की गवाही दे रही थी। यह कोई दुस्वप्न चल रहा था, या इतिहास ने मेरे सामने एक चुनौती रख दी थी। मैं सोचता जा रहा था और साथ ही डर भी रहा था। मैंने अपने सारे नोट्स दुबारा पढ़े ओर नाटक लिखने की मानसिक तैयारी करने लगा। इस बीच एक विचित्र घटना घटी। दरवाज़े पर दस्तक हुई। मैंने जब द्वार खोला तो सामने पुलिस के दो सिपाही खड़े थे। "क्या बात है?" मैंने पूछा।" आपको हमारे साथ थाने चलना होगा।" उनमें से एक सिपाही बोला।"किसलिए?" "आपको एक लाश की शिनाख्त करनी है।" यह सुनका मैं बेहद डर गया। कहीं कुछ अशुभ ज़रूर घटा है। सोचने का समय नहीं था। सड़क पर पुलिस की जीप प्रतिक्षा कर रही थी। थाने पहुंचकर मुझे बताया गया कि जो लाश मिली है उसके पास से एक डायरी बरामद हुई है, जिस पर मेरा नाम और पता लिखा हुआ है। मैं भीतर ही भीतर कांपने लगा। कहीं कोई पुराना वैर तो नहीं निकाल रहा? पर मै तो अदना सा लेखक हूं जिसकी किसी से कोई दुश्मनी नहीं है। कहीं पुलिस कोई षड्यंत्र तो नहीं रच रही थी? यह लोग किसी और को बचाने के लिए.... तो नही फंसाना चाहते मुझे?" क्या मैं लाश देख सकता हूं?'' साहस बटोर कर मैंने इंस्पेक्टर से कहा। "हां.... हां... क्यों नहीं.. ।" वापस जवाब मिला। हम एक बेहद ठंडे कमरे में गए, जहां, लाशें ही लाशें दिखाई दे रही थीं। जब वह लाश मुझे दिखाई गई तो मै डर गया। मेरे मुंह से अकस्मात निकला "हे राम!"यह किसी दरवेशनुमा आदमी की बुरी तरह से घायल और लहूलुहान लाश थी। जो पहचानने में नही आ रही थी। "क्या आप इसे पहचानते हैं?""नहीं!" मैंने विश्वास के साथ कहा। पर इसकी डायरी में आपका नाम पता लिखा है?"वह वर्दीपोश अंदाज़ में बोला। मुझे उलझाने के लिए उन्होंने कई और सवाल पूछे पर सफल नहीं हुए। अंततः कुछ समय थाने में बेमतलब बिठाए रखने के बाद शायद निर्दोश जानकर मुझे घर जाने दिया गया। अगले दिन सुबह जब मैं अखबार पढ़ रहा था तो एक छोटी सी खबर ने मेरा ध्यान आकर्षित किया। लिखा था, "कल पुलिस को शहर में एक पार्क के पास एक लाश मिली। उसके बैग से कुछ किताबें और एक डायरी बरामद हुई है।" इस आदमी का नाम दाराशिकोह बताया गया था। खबर पढ़ कर मैं सन्नाटे में आ गया। मेरे नाटक का नायक और मैंने ही नहीं पहचाना! पहचानता भी कैसे उसकी सारी देह लहूलुहान थी। सब कुछ भूल कर मैं नाटक लिखने में व्यस्त हो गया। समय बीत रहा था। और अचानक, एक दिन जब मैं लिखने में व्यस्त था, मेरे नाटक के पन्नों से औंरगज़ेब बाहर निकल आया। वह ज़ोर–ज़ोर से हंस रहा था। उसे इस तरह हंसते देख मैं डर गया। ऐसा लगने लगा कहीं हंसते–हंसते ही वह मेरा कत्ल न कर दे। मृत्यु की कल्पना से मैं डर गया। उधर वह भी मेरे डर को भांप कर बोला–"बता तो ज़रा कौन है तेरे नाटक का नायक?" मैं चुप रहा। मुझसे कुछ बोला नहीं जा रहा था। "क्या बोलेगा नहीं?" उसके स्वर में सत्ता का मद था। मैंने आंखें नीची कर लीं। लगा जैसे मैं अपनी अंतिम सांस ले रहा हूं। मेज़ पर मेरे नाटक की पांडुलिपि फड़फड़ा रही थी। मैंने देखा औंरगज़ेब के भय से शब्द कांप रहे थे। अब मैं क्या करूं? एक तरफ जीवन था, जीवन का मोह था, दूसरी तरफ आदर्श, किसका साथ दूं? कुछ नहीं सूझ रहा था। समय बीत रहा था और मैं अपनी कायरता से हार रहा था। अकस्मात मैंने अपने आप को यह कहते सुना–"क्षमा करना ज़हापनाह!" अपने ही शब्दों पर मुझे विश्वास नहीं हो रहा था। सोचने लगा था कि क्या मैं वही हूं जो नाटक में बड़ी बड़ी बातें कहता फिरता है! क्या सचमुच सत्य के बल से इतना अधिक होता है सत्ता का बल? या हमारी कायरता हमारी दुश्मन होती है? उसी समय मेरे अंतःकरण से एक और आवाज़ गूंजी – "इतिहास में दाराशिकोह की एक ही मौत लिखी है पर दाराशिकोह बार बार मरता है। हर बार उसे कोई औंरगज़ेब नहीं हमारी कायरता मारती है।''

...लाशें ही लाशें दिखाई दे रही थीं। जब वह लाश मुझे दिखाई गई तो मै डर गया। मेरे मुंह से अकस्मात निकला "हे राम!"यह किसी दरवेशनुमा आदमी की बुरी तरह से घायल और लहूलुहान लाश थी। जो पहचानने में नही आ रही थी। "क्या आप इसे पहचानते हैं?""नहीं!" मैंने विश्वास के साथ कहा।

समीक्षा

मनुष्यता का शिलालेख

दिनेश कुमार शुक्ल

भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ द्वारा प्रकाशित क्षमा कौल का उपन्यास 'दर्दपुर' अपूर्व नैतिक और रचनात्मक साहस का दस्तावेज है। ऐसा दस्तावेज जो धर्मान्ध बर्बरता के विरुद्ध लड़े जा रहे संघर्ष का शिलालेख है, जो चट्टानों पर नहीं बल्कि आत्माओं के पटल पर अक्षर–अक्षर चुनकर लिखा गया है। इसे एक धरोहर के रूप में पढ़ा जाना चाहिए। इसका पाठ सिर्फ कश्मीरी हिन्दुओं के संहार, उत्पीड़न और विस्थापन तक सीमित नहीं रहा। यह पाठ मनुष्य की आत्मा में उपस्थित भयानक अंधकार की कथा के साथ–साथ उस अँधेरे से मुठभेड़ करती हुई, कभी जलती, कभी बुझती, मानवीय आस्था की दीपशिखाओं की भी कथा कहता है। इस कथा में महाकाव्य का विस्तार है और महाकाव्य की गहराई भी। इसीलिए इसका गद्य कहीं–कहीं अचानक कविता के आवर्त में चला जाता है।

रेस्ट हाउस का बेयरा 'नूरा' एक ऐसा ही पात्र है। उसे आतंकवाद का असली रूप मालूम है। वह बताता है– "जो कुछ करता है पैसे वाला तबका ही करता है। सारे फैसले वही कर रहा है। सारा आतंकवाद वही ला रहा है। हम हैं कौन?...चलो, पंडित भाग गए... मकान हड़प लो, ज़मीन हड़प लो।"

स्वानुभूत यथार्थ की ज़मीन पर मज़बूती के साथ खड़ा इस उपन्यास का स्थापत्य कश्मीर घाटी में विस्थापितों के खाली पड़े मकानों जैसा ही 'हॉन्ट' करने वाला है। यह रचना भयानक विडम्बनाओं को खेल–खेल में इस तरह प्रस्तुत कर देती है जैसे कोई मुत्यु के साथ खिलवाड़ कर रहा हो और अपनी जिजीविषा के कौशल से मुत्यु को ही थका–थका कर मार रहा हो। इस उपन्यास की एक प्रमुख पात्र है 'भटिट्नी' जिसे पीढ़ियों से जेहादी उत्पीड़न को झेलने की आदत है। उसने इस हिंसा का सामना करने के लिए अपना एक खास तरीका अर्जित किया है। वह तरह–तरह के प्रहार सह कर ज़िन्दा बने रहने की कला विकसित कर चुकी है। जैसे कि यह भी एक तरह का जैविक 'एडापशन' हो। बहुसंख्यक मज़हब के लोग उसके बच्चों को प्रताड़ित करते हैं, वह जानती है बच्चों का कोई अपराध नहीं है, किन्तु उनको एक बड़ी हिंसा से बचाने के लिए वह उन्हें स्वयं सबके सामने ताड़ना देने लगती है। जटिल परिस्थितियों की अभिव्यक्ति तभी सफल हो पाती है जब इस तरह सरल और स्वाभाविक घटनाओं के माध्यम से उन्हें व्यक्त किया जाए। उपन्यास में जगह–जगह ऐसे प्रसंग आते हैं ज़हाँ पाठक भयानक अग्निकाण्डों के बीच से गुज़रता है। आग झुलसाने लगती है, किन्तु तभी अकस्मात पानी का सोता कहीं न कहीं से फूट पड़ता है। फ्लैशबैक की प्रविधि का उपयोग करते हुए उपन्यास भूतकाल में जाकर आसानी से वर्तमान में वापस लौट आता है और कभी–कभी अपने कथानक के संवेग में पाठक को भविश्य की गुफा में भी फेंक देता है। पाठक तब सोचने को विवश हो जाता है कि आज जो कश्मीर घाटी में घटित हो रहा है कल को कहीं वैसा ही अन्यत्र भी न घटित होने लगे। इस संशय को तब और पुष्टि मिलती है जब 'सुमोना' जैसे पात्रों से आमना–सामना होता है। 'सुमोना' उस छद्म उदारवादी वर्ग का प्रतीक है जो मनुष्य की पीड़ा को 'कमोडिटी' बनाकर उससे अपनी दुकान चलाता है। यह वर्ग उसी के पक्ष में बोलता है जिससे उसे धन और सत्ता की प्राप्ति होती है। जेहादी आतंकवादियों और धार्मिक कट्टरपंथियों का विरोध करने के बजाय 'सुमोना' जैसे अवसरवादी और अनैतिक चरित्र उल्टे पीड़ितों को ही बात–बात पर धमकाते चलते हैं। ऐसे चरित्रों से भारतीय मीडिया, पत्रकारिता और तथाकथित मानवतावादी संगठन भरे पड़े हैं। दरअसल 'सुमोना' जैसे सुविधाभोगी वर्ग के लोग आतंकवाद के ही प्रवक्ता है।

यह उपन्यास यद्यपि एक भयंकर यथार्थ की कथा कहता है किन्तु रचनाकार की संवेदना की पैनी दृष्टि विध्वंस के बीच छिपे उन जीवन के बीजों को भी देख लेती है जिनमें अभी अंकुर आने हैं। रेस्ट हाउस का बेयरा 'नूरा' एक ऐसा ही पात्र है। उसे आतंकवाद का असली रूप मालूम है। वह बताता है– "जो कुछ करता है पैसे वाला तबका ही करता है। सारे फैसले वही कर रहा है। सारा आतंकवाद वही ला रहा है। हम हैं कौन?...चलो, पंडित भाग गए... मकान हड़प लो, ज़मीन हड़प लो।" आतंकवाद पूँजीवाद और उसका अनुचर धार्मिक उन्माद। पेट्रो–डॉलर और पाश्चात्य पूँजीवाद का ही एक रूप है। विश्व–स्तर पर जेहादी धार्मिक उन्माद की विष–बेल समाजवादी देशों के विघटन के बाद

और तेजी से पनपी और फैली है, इसका मुख्य स्रोत है विश्व पूँजीवाद और उसका अनुचर धार्मिक उन्माद। पेट्रो–डॉलर और पाश्चात्य पूँजीवाद में गहरा गठजोड़ है। धार्मिक आतंकवादी इसी विश्व पूँजीवाद की जारज और लम्पट सन्तानें हैं। यह भी विश्व बाज़ार के साथ–साथ पैदा हुए बाई–प्रॉडक्ट हैं। उपन्यास की कथा इस गहराई को नूरा जैसे अपढ़ पात्र के ज़रिए व्यक्त करती है। यह लेखिका की राजनीतिक समझ का परिचायक है। समाजवादी व्यवस्थाओं को ध्वस्त करने में विश्व पूँजीवाद ने जिन तमाम हथियारों का प्रयोग किया उन्हीं में से एक था जेहादी आतंकवाद। युद्ध के बाद जिस तरह बारूदी सुरंगें छोड़कर सेनाएं वापस चली जाती हैं वैसे ही पूँजीवाद ने इस आतंकवाद की सुरंगें पूरे संसार में बिछा दी है। 'सुमोना' जैसे उदारवादी कहलाने वाले बहुत से तत्व इस आतंकवाद के ही सहचर हैं और इसमें भी खेल पूँजी का ही है। उपन्यास के शुरू में 'सुमोना' के रवैये से साफ पता चलता है कि वह विस्थापितों को आर्थिक सहायता तक देने के खिलाफ हैं– "उनसे दो टूक कह देना है कि हम उनके लिए कोई आर्थिक मदद लेकर नहीं आए हैं...।" सम्भवतः सहायता की राशि भी डकारने की योजना है। सुमोना के नाम का ओ–कारान्त भी अकारण नहीं है। यह एक सीधे–सीधे देशज नाम का अंग्रेज़ीकरण है ताकि विशिष्टता प्राप्त की जा सके और सपनों से अलग खड़े होकर 'तटस्थता' प्राप्त की जा सके। इस तरह के बारीक डिटेल्स उपन्यास में जगह–जगह मिलते हैं और लेखिका के रचानाकौशल का परिचय देते हैं।

ऐसी दो टूक ईमानदारी से लिखा गया कथानक किसी भी दूसरी समसामयिक गल्पकृति में नहीं दिखता। बिना लाग–लपेट के यह इस्लामी आतंकवाद के चालाक और भयानक तंत्र की व्यापकता और फरेब को व्यक्त करता है। यह आतंकतंत्र विश्व–स्तर पर फैला है।

पूरे उपन्यास में आत्मविस्मृति में डूबा एक बहुसंख्यक समाज है जिसे कभी–कभी अपना इतिहास याद आ जाता है। किन्तु यह स्मृति कोई स्थायी भाव नहीं छोड़ती। हाँ, ऐसे दुचित्ते लोग ज़रूर मिलते हैं जो अब भी ललद्यद के भजन और वाख् का पाठ करने लगते हैं। किन्तु–तुरंत ही फिर वापस अंधकार में लौट जाते हैं। बहुत से पात्र ऐसे हैं जिनमें अब भी स्वाभाविक निरीहता और सरलता विद्यमान है, जो मानवीय सम्बन्धों की ऊष्मा को सिगड़ी की आग की तरह बचाकर रखे हुए हैं। ऐसे पात्र गरीब तबकों, कलाकारों और स्त्रियों के बीच से ही आते है। किन्तु धार्मिक तन्त्र की चालाकी, क्रूरता और हिंसा का उभार उनको भी बर्बर भीड़ में तब्दील कर देता है।

धार्मिक आतंक की सतायी विश्व की सभी स्त्रियों को समर्पित यह उपन्यास कई अर्थों में समसामयिक हिन्दी कथा साहित्य में अपूर्व स्थान रखता है। ऐसी दो टूक ईमानदारी से लिखा गया कथानक किसी भी दूसरी समसामयिक गल्पकृति में नहीं दिखता। बिना लाग–लपेट के यह इस्लामी आतंकवाद के चालाक और भयानक तंत्र की व्यापकता और फरेब को व्यक्त करता है। यह आतंकतंत्र विश्व–स्तर पर फैला है। इसने आत्माओं को किस कदर जकड़ रखा है, यह उपन्यास बड़ी स्पष्टता से इसे अंकित करता है। मौका देखकर यह तंत्र प्रजातंत्र और सेक्यूलरिज़्म समर्थक बन जाता है और जैसे ही इसे बढ़त मिली यह निज़ामे–मुस्तफा का नारा लगाने लगता है। इस सत्य को इतनी बेबाकी से किसी भी अन्य हिन्दी कथाकार ने व्यक्त नहीं किया है। किन्तु यह उपन्यास भूगोल और इतिहास की सीमाओं का अतिक्रमण करके पाठक को कई दूसरे धरातलों पर भी ले जाता है, जहाँ जटिल मानवीय सम्बन्धों के मार्मिक प्रसंग आते हैं। प्रेमी–युगल को देखकर प्रसन्न होते पहाड़ हैं या खाली पड़े विस्थापितों के मकानों की आत्मा की पुकार हमें सुनाई देती है। अपने भौतिक "लोकेल" से ऊपर उठकर कथानक पाठक को बार बार ऐसे जादुई लोक में ले जाता है जहाँ पृथ्वी, जल और आकाश आदमी के साथ बातचीत करने लगते हैं। सूने पड़े मकानों से स्तोत्र पाठ के स्वर आने लगते हैं। उपन्यास में अक्सर कविता गद्य को पीछे छोड़ देती है। एक उदाहरण –"उसकी नर्तक आत्मा के पंख हैं . . . (वह) बाहर उड़कर देखती है। वह पहुँच जाती है अपने पिता के घर में और वहाँ छोटे से आँगन में देखती है कि आँगन लाल है। तारे अदृश्य। मानो कोई साजिश रचने के लिए लाल कोठरी में घुस गए हों। पापा दुबके हुए हैं कोने में... स्वयं में संतुष्ट हैं।" यहाँ आत्मरति का अर्थ बदल जाता है।

यह उपन्यास स्त्री पात्रों से भरा पड़ा है। कहीं नैतिक साहस की प्रतीक इस उपन्यास की कथा कहती हुई "सुधा" है तो दूसरी ओर लाभ–लोभ और छद्म का प्रतीक "सुमोना" भी है। विस्थापितों के खाली पड़े घरों पर कब्जा जमाने वानी "हुचकोकिल" क्रूर ही नहीं डरपोक भी है और प्रेम भी करती है। जिजीविषा की प्रतीक भट्टिनी है जिससे उसके घर की आत्मा का प्रेम हो जाता है। इन तमाम स्याह और सफेद रंग वाले पात्रों के रंगों के अनेक शेड्स हैं जो कभी, हल्के गहरे होते रहते हैं। स्त्री पात्रों के अन्तर्मन की कोमलता और कुटिलता के अनेक रुलाने और हँसाने वाले चित्र जगह–जगह इस कथा में बिखरे पड़े हैं। दोहरे–तिहरे आतंक और उत्पीड़न को झेलते हुए अपनी संवेदना को लगातार जीवित रखना तथा भयानक तूफान में भी जीवन के दीये की लौ को बचाए रखना स्त्रियों का सहज स्वभाव है। किन्तु धर्मान्धता और पूँजीवाद का लाभ–लोभ उन्हें भी "हुचकोकिल" और "सुमोना" बना देता है। यह उपन्यास कभी–कभी आत्मकथा का भी रूप लेने लगता है किन्तु लेखिका ने अपने रचना कौशल द्वारा इसे व्यक्तिगत धरातल से उठाकर समष्टिगत बना दिया है। यह उपन्यास एक अपूर्व मानवीय साहस की गाथा है। मनुष्यता का शिलालेख है।

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